



# *Longmans Miscellany*

*Number Three*

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A COLLECTION  
OF POETRY SHORT STORIES  
ARTICLES AND PICTURES  
BY LIVING AUTHORS  
AND ARTISTS

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*Longmans Green  
& Co Ltd*

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LONGMANS MISCELLANY  
NUMBER THREE



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## ILLUSTRATIONS

Reproduction of a WASH DRAWING by *D P Roy Chowdhury* appears opposite page 1, by courtesy of the artist

In "Kulu Diary 1944" appear PEN AND INK SKETCHES by the author , and in "Grandparents" appear LINE DRAWINGS by *E G N Kinch*

CARTOONS by *W A Wilcox* appear between page 128 and page 129

PHOTOGRAPHS by "*Libra*", illustrating "A South Indian Village Festival", appear between page 16 and page 17 , those illustrating "Goa Today" appear between page 152 and page 153

The design for the DUST JACKET is by *Janum Roy* and the layout for the TITLE PAGE is by *Lawrence Reynolds*

## FOREWORD

**I**n publishing Longmans Miscellany Number Three we have little to add to what we have said in previous Forewords. One reviewer of Number Two said that Longmans Miscellany has found its roots as a hardy annual (a pleasantly horticultural phrase which suggests left handedly that little is required from year to year beyond loosening the top soil and adding manure) and another that this publication is now a permanent literary annual. As we propose to bring out Number Four next year both reviewers are right and we thank them and such of their fellow-critics who took the trouble to give useful criticisms and suggestions instead of relying on quotations from our own blurb (publishers write ups of their own wares are proverbially unreliable) or our own Forewords.

We would like to comment on two of these suggestions. The first was that we should concentrate on new or unknown writers. It is not for us to say whether a writer is known or unknown but we can say whether or not he has contributed previously to Longmans Miscellany. Of the authors in this issue fourteen have not been represented before in our pages—a fair proportion we think. The second suggestion was that we should persuade our contributors to write about 'the more intimate and little known traits of their countries lives'. We confess that we have not done this since we would rather be free to choose from what is submitted to us than dictate to our authors or fetter ourselves. While we have been guided as we wrote in the last Foreword in our choosing from the mass of material submitted by a desire to keep the standard high and have concentrated on serious criticism on serious poetry on serious attempts to surmount the difficulties of short story writing we feel that we have included nothing that is merely weighty, nothing that is not either interesting or amusing or stimulating for a very large group of readers.



We can, at this stage, give no idea when Number Four will be published, but poems, articles, short stories, drawings and paintings may be sent from now on, for consideration for the next number, these should be addressed to

The Editor, Longmans Miscellany,  
c/o Longmans, Green & Co, Ltd,  
17, Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta,

or they may be handed into Longmans' offices in Bombay or Madras. All contributions will be acknowledged but none will be returned unless adequate postage is sent. Outright payment is made, on publication, for all work accepted.

*Calcutta,  
September, 1945*





*Wash Drawing by D P*

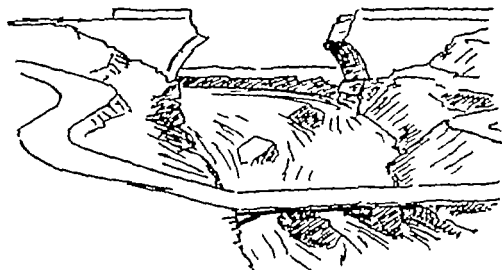
*T Howard Somervell*

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*KULU DIARY 1944*

*Tuesday September 12*

**L** EFT Pathankot early morning 3-30 for Nagrota in little train 8+ luggage in a single seat 2nd, just room to get a good sleep, before I woke up at 6-30 to see the sunrise on the Dhauladhar, the long rocky ridge of 14,000 feet or so going on for 20 miles and almost overhanging Dharmasala. The views of it this clear morning, were very fine—first, as a blue range of uniform colour and texture, then bits of snow just visible, and later all rock ridges etc picked out by the sun. Started at Nagrota in bus, which did not go far (Palampur) where we had to trans ship to another bus owing to a big bridge being down. The terrific rain



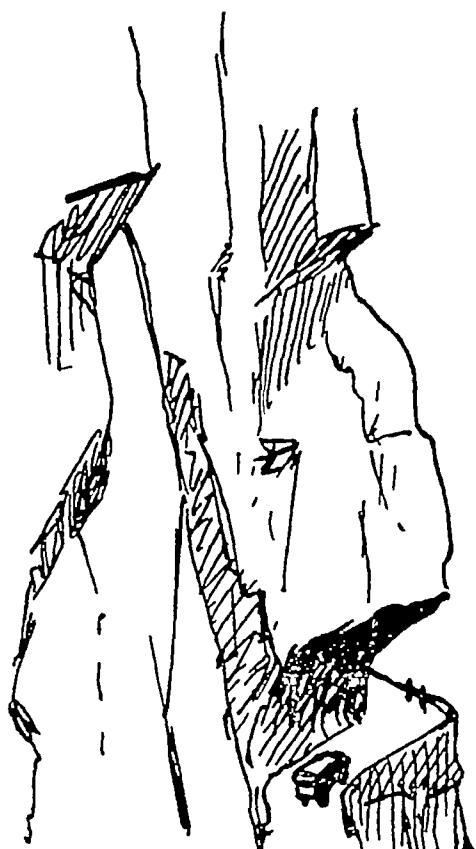
20 inches in 5 hours, one day in early August has destroyed a large number of bridges, some of them great big stone arches many feet above the river, and this sort of thing is a common sight, with new diversion

of road to temporary bridges made of logs. Turned out of bus at Jogindai Nagar and told to go to D B for the night, but a station wagon turned up going to Mandi, 40 miles on, and offered us a lift (one Jones of Dunlop Co, Calcutta, and myself). Lovely country, rather like travelling in North Italy just south of the Alps, and all views outward over the plains (south) rather than upward to mountains. Mandi is a big town, on River Beas, with very quaint and large Raja's castle rising above the roofs of the town. Excellent D B in a lovely situation high above the town. Wooden buildings, like a Swiss town without a café or *patisserie*.

### Wednesday, September 13

Station wagon called for us at 7 a.m. and we dashed off to Kulu. A real gorge road—like this in places,

with overhanging rocks—but more usually just cut away and built up. One of the finest and longest gorges I have been in, quite low down, only 3,000 feet or so. Suddenly the valley opens out and then reminds me of the Munnar-Udumalpet Road in S India, but with occasional glimpses of snow. Stopped at Kulu P.W.D. to arrange for D B's for trek, and had just rejoined car when the Roerichs' driver turned up with their car, in which Jones and I went to Katrain where he is staying and where the car is kept. Tea with Tyson and his



boarders, and then walk up to Naggar Very warm welcome from the Roerichs, and excellent food It is delightful to be in a home so full of culture and beauty I stay at "Urusvati" their annexe 200 feet above the house, with their family doctor a Russian whose English is amazingly bad but who is very friendly He lived in Turkestan 20 years, and 11 in India having left Russia in 1913

*Thursday September 14*

Walked up the spur on which Naggar is built, to about 8500 feet, and did a bad sketch Lovely forest walk but forest a bit too thick high up

*Friday September 15*

Did no long walk in a m, but sketched Naggar temple, and did some reading In afternoon, R shewed me over 100 of his small sketches, in tempera on grey paper, most lovely, especially some in the Karakorams which must be glorious sketching country An afternoon to be long remembered (N B Dark foregrounds, charcoal outlines Often sky carried over paper)

*Saturday September 16*

Rain in early morning Writing etc and down to Naggar to see suitcase etc and more pictures in afternoon by Svetoslav Roerich Some good small sketches especially one of a mountain I hope to see in a few days Good talk and the usual excellent 5-course dinner, with very good news on radio at 9-30 and so to bed

*Sunday September 17*

Up early 7 a m to sketch Gyephan lovely morning Reading *Man the Unknown* by A Carrel A most interesting book, civilization a failure because it is material—takes no account of the spiritual side of man's

nature—soul and body are in many senses one, being bound up with one another, and man cannot be considered in his bodily side only or disaster will result. Made copious notes of it. Sketching in morning, an old house in the village and a view of Gyephan in afternoon. The R's are providing so much food for me that I fear I shan't do much slimming.

*Monday, September 18.*

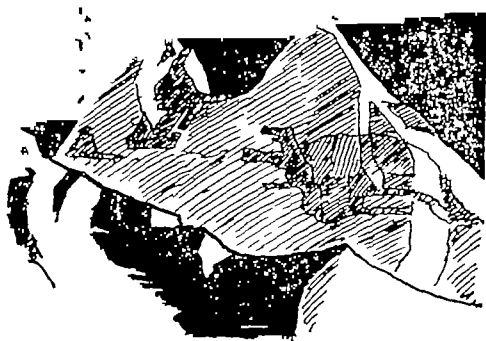
To MANALI, starting at 9 from Naggar, repacking suitcase at Katrain, 11 mile walk up the valley, mostly near the river, with fine trees. Arrived there 4 p.m. having got a lift for the last 2 miles in a car, Walford of Burma Shell Co., with whom I dined in Madras 14 years ago. Tea very welcome at Major Banon's hotel. Walked with Walford to a *mela* in a village 2 miles away. Several gods (brass masks) in palanquins attended the *mela*. Slow dancing by the men, and very wild sword-play. This goes on 3 days and nights, the tired ones falling out and their places being taken by fresh ones. Pathetic sight, a mixture of darkness and superstition. But I suppose even that is better than having no religion at all.

*Tuesday, September 19*

To KOTI. Put up with a Mrs. Romans, a great tennis player, Walford and I sharing a room in her house. She is very nice indeed, and was so decent to 2 gate-crashers. Started at 10-30 with Walford for Koti—after 5 miles stopped for lunch, sketch etc. and a sun bath, went on alone up the gorgeous valley, with a fine thunderstorm going on up on the rocky peaks to the west. Bridge above bungalow 25 feet long, depth of gorge below 165 feet. Lovely deodars, and rocky scenery, very broken valley here, bungalow in a lovely place on a hill above it. No milk or eggs, but plenty of cows and hens!

*Wednesday September 20*

TO KOKSAR Glorious walk First through deodars, then at 9000 feet or so we are suddenly in England Maples, walnut trees, and for 2000 feet all the flowers are exactly as in England Sorrel, dandelion, daisies, wild geranium, clover and many others Only one flower did I see here not found in England Then up and up to desolate, lonely land, with fine gorges and rocks, and short grass and very few flowers Easy ascent to the Rothang Pass, 13 500, and suddenly one is in Tibet No trees even in the valley, people talking Tibetan, Tibetan houses, and a monastery just



opposite the Koksar bungalow Good firewood for 8 annas and a nice cosy D B where I write this (after a very cold bathe in the river) by a big fire Did several sketches on the pass of the local mountains, notably the lovely twin peaked Gvephan



*Thursday, September 21*

TO SISSER Rather disappointing weather, as it is cloudy over Lahul, but some good mountain views for brief moments. Sisser is a good place with trees and Tibetan-like houses, and must have good views when it is clear. But the march is all along a valley, and rather monotonous. The mountains on the left get finer as one gets further along the gorge, and some of them just ahead (on tomorrow's march) are unbelievably steep. I never saw such a succession of nearly vertical precipices—all from the valley, but perhaps I can come back on a high-level route, if fit and if weather is good on the return journey.

*Friday, September 22*

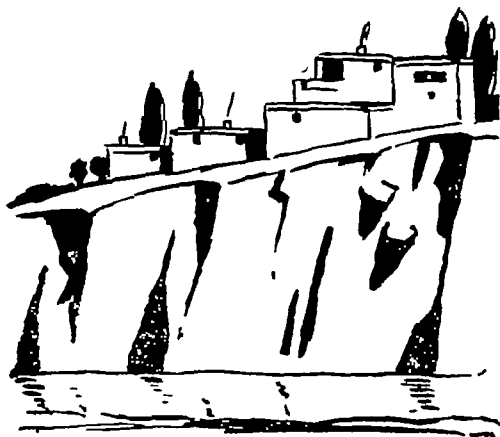
TO GONDLA One of the most glorious days I ever spent in the Himalayas. Began with a wonderful dawn—snow bright yellow, rocks orange, and shadows blue and purple. Soon got into country like the Dolomites on a colossal scale, with 3 mountains on south side of path, each like an immense Tofana des Roccs, and finally we got to G, which is not unlike a brown and yellow (grassless) and big version of San Martino di Castrozza, with glorious colours—I never saw better. Waited to sketch every half mile until my book was finished, I began a new book with the 'Thakor's Castle at G, a lovely old building, partly a Gompa. Many Tibetans about, and quite a few Lamas—the good old Tibetan smell of smoke and bad butter.

*Saturday, September 23*

TO KYELANG A very wearisome march on the dustiest of tracks all along moraine-like stuff near the bank of the Chandra river, or several hundred feet above it. But very lovely views, especially every time one passed a valley and looked up to see a peak of 19, or 20,000

\* One of the finest and largest of the Dolomite peaks

feet at its head Then down to the river level, and near the meeting of the 2 rivers a suspension bridge, and we cross to the right bank of the Shaga river Different country here, more water and trees, the first 6 miles from Gondla were waterless and sandy Lovely views of mountains and I could not resist several sketches, sometimes of mountains and sometimes of little Tibetan towns on the hillside There are plenty of them some of them very picturesque and finely placed Altogether a glorious day for views though dusty beyond words on the road



*Sunday September 24*

AT KYELANG Kyelang is 2 small towns, with streets rather like Phari Dzong in Eastern Tibet, but not so dirty Both towns very quaint and Tibetan like A



very important gent in a glorious gilded hat and a crimson robe, grey British stockings and Oxford shoes, attended by well-dressed women and 5 or 6 lamas passed through the village today. Went 2 short walks for sketches not far away because of sore feet and strange as it may seem rain-storms!

*Monday, September 25*

TO GONDLA The overland route seems barred by stiff rocks at the top, so back again along the dusty path, dust laid in places by rain yesterday, but very few places, so I left the path and went up to Gondla Gampa, 1,500 feet above the road up a steep zigzag path. 6 lamas in Gampa, very poor-looking, one shewed me round, inside it is typically Tibetan, a Buddha, 1 or 2 gurus and a Dalailama, also a Hindu god with 16 arms (? who—the lama was incoherent here). Paintings around the walls, traditional style. On the altar was an old head of Buddha, marble (where from?) About 6-7th century I should say, Indo-Grecian in style. Asked the lama to shew me the way to Gondla, and he went up the hill at a rare pace, when I had breathlessly joined him, he pointed out the most hair-raising track along a slope of slate lying at the critical angle and ending in a precipice. I practised slipping and stopping myself first, and finding I could stop on the slope I set off for 2 miles of this stuff, gradually getting down to the path 4 miles from Gondla. The last water I saw at 12-30 when I lunched on the way up to Gondla, and I tramped along the last 2 or 3 miles, very thirsty, hardly able to enjoy the lovely views. Bungalow chokidar not in, bungalow shut, so I removed a pane

of glass in bathroom door and got in No firewood but Abdul and I collected sticks and I soon had some



welcome tea Eventually the old boy turned up with some firewood, and I was O K

*Tuesday September 26*

GONDLA TO SISSU The most beautiful march and one of the finest I have been anywhere in the Himalayas, I had to press on and resist sketching, but did 2 or 3 Arrived in good time Firewood etc O K, so I heated a whole jugful of water and had a much needed bath, felt fine afterwards Also got 2 lbs potatoes (3 annas, eggs are 4 annas each, firewood 10 annas for 10 seers, down to 3 annas, as at Gondla) Not a bad spot though the sun sets very early, and I had to have a brisk walk after the bath Grand fire going now and I will soon go to bed, ready for a rather weary march tomorrow

*Wednesday, September 27*

TO KOKSAR Started on a high-level route, past a few isolated farms, all very Tibetan in style, on the hillside 1,000 feet or so above the gorge of the Kangra river. Then a bit higher with magnificent views of the mountains opposite, which are the most amazingly steep faces and precipices I have ever seen. Glaciers ending in space as it were, with 2,000 feet of sheer drop below, down which presumably thunders from time to time a large chunk of ice. Lovely day, as clear as a day can be, and exquisite colours in the shadows of rocky ridges and cliffs 5,000 feet high.

*Thursday, September 28*

TO KOTI Struck up straight from Koksar to the mountain above it, 14,500 or so, resting every hour for a sketch or an apple or just a breather. Good going mostly, on steep grass and dwarf heather, occasional stony slopes (avoided when possible). The mountain when attained seems to be only a satellite of the Beas Rikki peak, so I traverse it, avoiding the very rickety and vertical gendarmes on their northern side. Over another peak with some steep icy slopes up which steps have to be cut with a piece of slate which makes a good ice-axe. Did 2 sketches of mountains to north, lovely views and quite clear 1 p.m. to Manali. Then traversed to south side for ascent of final peak (15,185), rather breathless the last 400 feet. My "ceiling" is now probably about 16,000'. Nice top like the Taschhorn\* and just about the same quality of rock. Clouds came over north and east, but south and west were the loveliest views of the "Kulu Weisshorn", and other fine mountains. Did several rough sketches, no time for paint. Prospected a way down which did me no credit as a climber—easy enough ground, but very

\* A mountain in the Alps noted for its broken and dangerous rock.

steep grass, largely traversed on right side of feet—result 2 blisters—sole of heel right and left—and a very sore pair of feet trudged the last 5 miles on the track. Met 2 Himalayan Clabbites in Mead tent, who gave me some tea, and had an hour's chat and rest. Abdul anxious at my lateness met me on the track with a pony which I gladly mounted for the last mile to Koti. The most glorious day views, shapes and colours of mountains etc

*Friday, September 29*

TO MANALI. A bit footsore, but got on all right and arrived in time for an excellent lunch, the first civilized meal for 2 weeks, and a bath in the evening. Banon very busy with apples for the Army.

*Saturday September 30*

TO KATRAIN AND NAGGAR. Called on Gilbert, the Medical Missionary at Manali, a very nice and sensible chap. He kindly drove me to Katrain as the bus was full up half an hour before it started, and my blistered feet won't stand the walk. Luggage repacked at Tyson's and I walked up to Naggar, meeting S. Roerich at the bridge. He had been to the *mela* at Sultanpur. Usual genial welcome from the Roerichs. Arranged to go up to Chandrakanni next day.

*Sunday October 1*

Started at 10 a.m. with Kasim and a pony to camp at the foot of the Chandrakanni Pass. Up and up through the forest to over 11,000 feet, when we came out on a very sloping clearing. Unloaded and started looking for firewood etc, but found no water. I went on prospected and found a much better camp site a mile further on, with 2 streams of water, one a good spring. So back again to Kasim, repacking up and on to the other camp site. Pitched tent, had a cup of tea, and on to a view point near the Chandrakanni. Splendid

view, especially over the Kulu valley to the west, but clear to the east and a good array of peaks seen

*Monday, October 2*

Got up early and found it snowing or hailing. Had a cold breakfast and went up a small peak 12,600 south-west of Chandrakanni. Much better view, as this is the highest point for at least 6 miles in any direction. Did 3 sketches of Deo Tibba and other mountains. No colour, as the sky was overcast with cloud at 20,000. No view over Kulu mountains above 19,000, but grand view to north-east and east. Down to camp and got to Naggar in  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours from top of mountain (with blisters reappearing) in time for lunch. Worked at sketches, while fresh in my memory.

*Tuesday, October, 3*

3-hour view of Roerich's sketches—grand. Noticed how often he uses only 2 colours in a picture. Lovely larger ( $3' \times 1\frac{1}{4}'$ ) picture of Bara Lacha La. Down to Katrain after tea, for a night at Tyson's before the early start tomorrow.

*Wednesday, October 4*

TO MANDI. Station wagon arranged by Jones to arrive at 7. Nothing arrived by 12. So sent various wires, putting off Delhi meeting. Wagon arrived, by luck or providence, at 1-30, with other people for Katrain in it. Same Jehu as last time, a cheery soul and an excellent driver, the car went wrong about once every 2 miles, but he repaired it in double quick time, drying the distributor in fires made by the roadside, each time the car started perfectly though I challenge any electrical engineer except Jehu to disintegrate the wiring. Rain till Kulu which looks very tired after Dasara Mela, then gradually improving weather and a lovely evening for arrival at Mandi.

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*Thursday October 5*

Mandi is surely one of the quaintest towns in India, like Kufstein or some Tyrolean town with its castle in the middle. Sketched it, and left after early lunch for a good and uneventful drive to Nagrota. Lovely views, especially of the Dhaula Dhar in the evening sun with cloud half way up the hills. No D B at Nagrota, so slept (very well) in train, after a very indigestible dinner of pepper with a little mutton and rice underneath. Satisfactory journey to Pathankot and Amritsar—Delhi next day. The end of a gorgeous holiday. Why didn't I discover Kulu before?

The sketches are by THE AUTHOR

*P J Martin*

---

## *EVENING IN BENGAL*

THERE are no sounds on the water  
In the hot night  
The fallen bark  
Floats on the silent pool  
And the reeds grow dark

There is no wind on the water  
In the heavy night  
The broken pots  
Lie in the black, cracked mud  
Where the thrown flesh rots

There are no ripples on the water  
As the sun dies  
The soft green slime  
Drips from the dead tree roots  
In the summer time



*Yu-Mei Lim*

---

## ORACLE BONES

**T**IME released by delicate blue coiled springs  
Tells on man's visage and woman's hands  
On luminous dials images flood back  
As if distorted by trick mirrors at Fairs

Life's train journey past the window flies,  
Leaving humans as slaves to memories chained,  
A lifetime shackled to a receding landscape  
Mortals like telegraph poles mile after mile  
Silhouetted against a reddening sky  
Stand only to slant and disappear,  
The narrowing vision vanishes beyond,  
Into a dream project the yesterdays,  
Cast at fate's threshold are the tomorrows

Consciousness follows in the wake of dream  
'And years vanish like the morning dew'  
Think of a childhood that waned in one full moon,  
A manhood that only brushed the skirt of ambition  
Whilst the coffin lies in wait in the heart of man  
So palpitates another life within the womb

'Be not left yourselves your own tormentors,'  
Regretful of an ever fading past,  
Fretful of a present frayed and fevered,  
Fearful of a future insecure

Accept the mysteries of Birth and Death  
 In that instant brief space when the lightning  
 Sinister, streaks past the scaly roof tops  
 Disappears amongst the tree trunks opposite  
 'Midst thunder peal, as a tree, in flames, uprooted  
 Silently crashes across the benumb'd plain  
 Let the winds howl over bodies dead and dying,  
 For what remains is brutal except your ideal

Then must the cold and frost ravage the earth,  
 Already much scarred like the woman's bellyskin  
 By frequent pregnancies disfigured  
 Then must the soil burn and crack with heat  
 As the morning sun climbs the noontide sky  
 And all shadows cast by men and beasts retreat

Chipped and peeled are the temples' dragon roofs  
 Broken down are the miniature bridges,  
 Tumbled are the thousand steps up the rockery scene  
 Rank weeds sprout as walls grow green with mosses,  
 Not even the fragrance of jasmín will linger  
 Gold fish that once glistened in the sun  
 And fluttered ethereal fins in jade green water,  
 Now that the pond is parched in heaven

O-o their mouths

So died the fountain's myriad coloured lights  
 Leaving the rainbow and sunset unrivalled  
 Think not of those manly strides vibrant,  
 Which woke the violets covered the forget me nots  
 Only will the breeze be left to quiver the grass blades  
 And on approach dewdrops that tremble on leaves  
 Weep not for the oxen boy whose magic flute

once charmed

The Fairy Maiden till for mortal love she pined,  
 For caked on the highway is his bespattered brain  
 'Tears are no use and those who mourn grow mad,  
 The dead are gone and with them you cannot converse,  
 The living are here and ought to have your love '

You have crawled out of the intertidal slime,  
To present heights of scientific feats,  
Yet only pillars shall stand as classic ruins  
When nations contemplate what price peace  
Individuals have no lives when statesmen speak  
Only flick'ring candles their lipped thought radiate.  
Ironical tokens are crosses amidst widows' weeds  
Of dead men's deeds, and too soon forgotten  
Are last night's pledges, even on parchment writ,  
Only incense smoke bearing loved messages  
Will curl past the carved ceiling into heaven

*"Libra"*

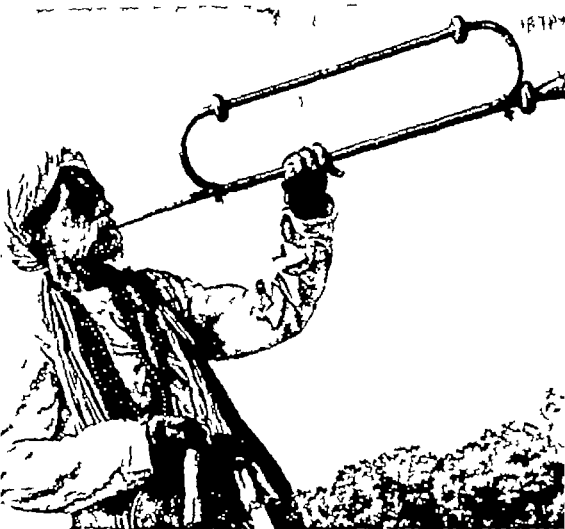
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## A SOUTH INDIAN VILLAGE FESTIVAL

ONCE A YEAR, every Indian village holds a festival in honour of its god. The festival will be to propitiate that deity to protect the villagers, their livestock and their crops during the next twelve months.

Such a village festival will be a weird and colourful occasion. Sights that one can never expect from the simple villages of India are unfolded before one's eyes; and one is reminded, in the quaint costumes and the queer ceremonials that are seen that day, of the strange ceremonies that are celebrated in the interior of Africa or the heart of Central Asia.

On the day fixed by the village astrologer the festival takes place. All the villagers turn out many hours before morning on the maidan before the village temple. Then begin, one by one, the strange ceremonies connected with the festival. Village youths, attired in white, painted with curious patterns and wearing flowers in profusion, turn out to accompany the procession.



THREE PEOPLE FOR WHOM THE FESTIVAL IS A GREAT DAY THE MENDICANT  
THE BOY AND THE HEADMAN





THE VILLAGE GOD  
THE CROWD





THE VILLAGE PRIEST  
IN PROCESSION

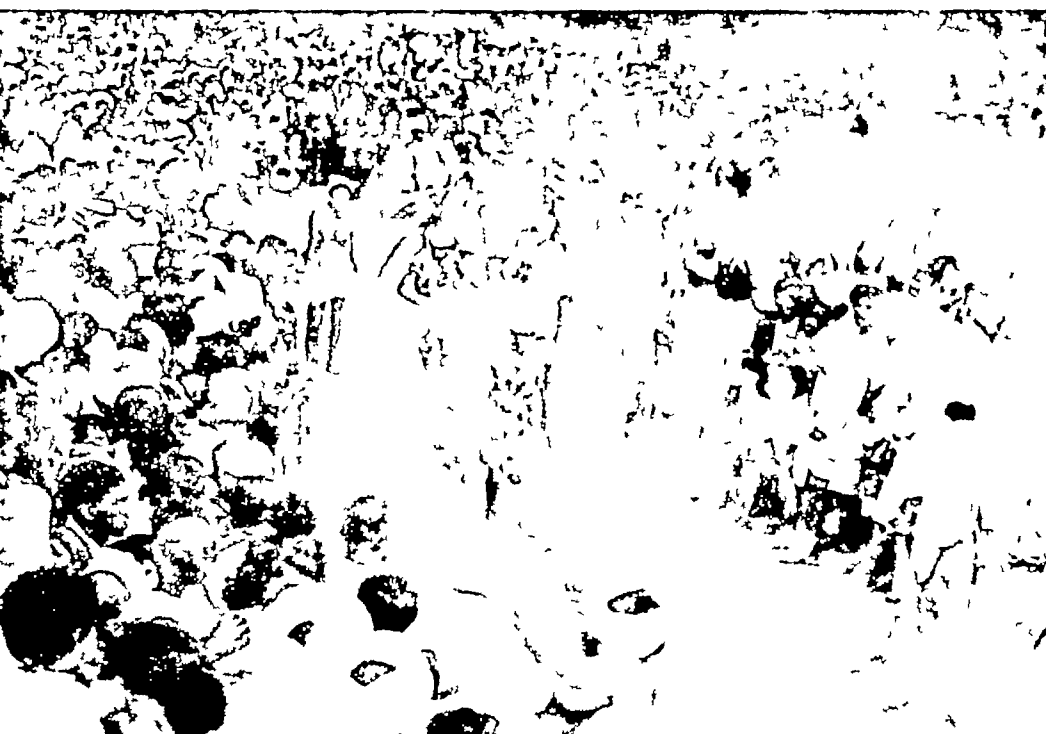
VILLAGE WOMEN WITH  
TORCHES, LIVING THE  
PROCESSION





FIREWA  
WAITIN  
TURN

FIREWA  
RUNNIN  
THE TR  
RED EM



Big drums, queer trumpets and odd musical instruments are brought out

In the end, as evening approaches, the image of the village god, accompanied by all the villagers and borne on the head of the chief priest, returns to the temple

At the close of the day, the final propitiation in the shape of fire-walking takes place. In front of the shrine, a trench two feet wide two feet deep and thirty feet long, will be dug and filled with live embers. The chief priest, followed closely by the painted men of the village, trot along the burning trench.

After all have taken their turn and come out with their bare feet as if nothing has happened, the festival closes. The villagers return home satisfied, firmly convinced that nothing in the world can do harm to themselves and their village.

It will be a festive night that is spent in the village after the close of the festival. Hot dinners, the very best, await all. There will be gay singing and most of the other forms of decent merriment, and it will be happy villagers that go to bed when the day is finally over for them.

*Maurice Freedman*

## WINTER

THE glow from the concealed lights in the walls and the over simplified chandeliers, white and brittle, reflected only faintly in the unpolished table-top. The knives and forks caught it brilliantly from time to time but turned it to the credit of the sunlight that must—suggested the starched napkin, the cool frozen oranges, the crystal tumbler—be particularly crisp, razor-edged, surgical on the winter's morning that lay beyond the pastel green curtains and the red verandah roof. In each corner of the large dining room stood an electric fire (they are wrong, thought Callan, definitely



wrong, remembering the doggerel that rhymed and punned with hocus-pocus and focus) whose false cheerfulness, steady and qualified, clung to its source and refused steadfastly to lend any warmth to the pale cream walls and plainwood furniture. The glazed atmosphere tinkled and off-chimed with the manoeuvring of shiny plates and the prittle prattle of the small-talking diners. Callan chipped off the icicles that held his mind in a chilled stupor. He stamped his feet under the table and called for beer. Then he was alive for the first time since the long freezing drive down from the hills, and recalled the keen wind with a shade of appreciation as one might be thankful, after an operation, to the inhuman scalpel. More diners came into the room, a woman in red corduroy trousers, a man in blond tweeds, a couple in riding dress with canary sweaters, blue kerchiefs, scarlet gloves, mahogany boots. The electric fires picked up. The cream walls deepened. The air thawed. Sound dropped an octave. A damp cloth swished away the remains of a meal from the other side of Callan's table and left a gloss of yellow light. The polished brown floor caught his eye and he thought that after all it was a welcome change from his slapdash and never quite clean bungalow. Here even the whitewashed ceiling, so high and inaccessible, looked as fresh as new milk. And then out of the corner of his eye he saw a small fanlight, tucked away from obvious glance, coated irregularly with dust and cobwebs, and he smiled and nodded in recognition, in friendship.

Taking his coffee cup with him he rose from the table and walked to the nearest window to stand sipping and surveying the stretch of grounds that lay between the squash courts and the swimming bath. The roses and narcissi were fresher for the cold and the close-cropped grass on the lawn glinted in the sun. He shivered slightly, remembered that it was actually warmer in the dining-room, deposited his cup on the window seat, looked at his wrist watch, and walked away in the direction of the bar.

The sudden change was discomfiting. A great over-ripe brownish warmth billowed in a haze between the oaken pillars. The logs cracked and fell in the open hearth and a rich heat exuded from the leather seats, the massive oak bar, the scarlet coats of the past whips of the Vale Hunt who hung all round the panelled dado, the ageing antlers on the wall, the ruby port in glass barrels on the counter. But he would have to stay. Searching for Wacker his eye caught that of one of the men gathered tightly about the blazing fire and he nodded a greeting. This place was too hot. A perfect day and they roasted in here. He lit a cigarette, leaned against the bar, and prepared to wait.

Ten minutes later Wacker would arrive, all six feet two of him and the broad shoulders bursting into the room purposeful and undeterrable. At this time of the year he would be wearing grey flannel trousers and tweed jacket, white shirt and the tie with red and blue stripes, in his buttonhole one of those frost candied jonquils. And in his hand a briefcase. Yes, in his hand a briefcase. He would enquire after Callan's health, offer him a cigar, recall that it was six months almost to the day since they had last met, ask him where he was going to stay, perhaps even offer him hospitality for the month, talk about Eveline and the children, and finally open the briefcase and suggest a quiet corner with drinks for business. Wacker, Wacker. A too closely shaven face, full, round, red, blue eyes, curly yellow hair just fading from his fore head. In the summer he had perspired too much and there had been a sore line round his collar, but now he would be as fit as the Wacker who ten years before.

He was by Callan's side, the briefcase on the bar counter, a big heavy hand slapping a greeting.

"And if Eveline didn't have her hands so full with the new brat of course I should ask you to stay with us. Anyhow I suppose you have fixed up here in the club. No? Oh, I've forgotten again. Old Latif will want to have you in his place. Won't be so bad in this weather, though. Have a drink. Sherry?"

Do you know it's exactly six months since I saw you? How am I looking? Well? This weather suits me down to the ground Just like home And what news of you?"

The briefcase was routine To Wacker's importunings Callan smiled patiently and reminded him that he was merely a servant of government, powerless to open a seam that God and the Empire had for so long conspired to keep concealed "Surely," he said gently, "we have been over this many times before"

Wacker was for a moment annoyed and his lips pouted "For lack of coal," he began and then snapped to the clasp of his briefcase "All right," he said, "forget it Can I drop you anywhere?"

The first chapter is the worst. If, reflected Callan as huddled in his sheepskin he sat at Wacker's side in the Buick, if I can break down my basic idea by some sort of intelligible calculus I shall be able to lead other people on to my position gradually Other people? I suppose that if I were honest I should admit that I'm doing it only to clarify my own muddled mind It's exasperating to know what I cannot readily express Only by indirect approach but isn't that just what I am adopting as my thesis? All conception is by analogy You understand *a* only because in some way it resembles a *b* which you already comprehend

Let me see now, I had it all planned out First of all I must lay my verbal cards on the table and keep nothing up my sleeve It's a pity that language is so inexact a medium of exposition I'm sure that you could wreck any philosophical system that ever was by a careful analysis of its terminology Follows that I must be wary at the outset Well then, I have to make my hypothesis in the beginning, which is of course in accordance with the best scientific procedure And that hypothesis is THAT THERE IS ONE INDIVISIBLE UNITY (Tautology? Watch out!) UNDERLYING ALL PHENOMENA Wait Isn't this putting the cart before the horse? I thought I was supposed to proceed from the diverse to the unified, pyramidally? But no, that's perfectly correct I

must start with something clearcut I make a statement of my hypothesis and then prove it All right then Stage One THE APPARENT DIVERSITY A STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM Hold, hold, hold I see I'm making certain assumptions concerning the nature of reality and apprehensibility In fact, now that I come to think of it, I am not so much concerned with the Indivisible Unity or whatever else I choose to call it, as the process by which that unity is to be conceived by human intelligence And if I maintain that knowledge is acquired only through the process of analogical reasoning no, not reasoning, because that would rule out aesthetic and non rational knowledge well anyway through the process of analogical (word to be supplied later), if I maintain that then I have to explain away the uncomfortable fact of the primary acquired basis from which each individual works *a* is easy once you know *b*, but by what means is *b* apprehended? There's only one way to go about it What is likely to be the cognition of a newborn baby? What it sees and feels and smells and hears cannot immediately have any meaning (or is this an unwarranted assumption of *tabula rasa*?) and yet it is obvious that it will commit certain of the things conveyed to it by its senses to memory, and later will be able to make comparisons One thing will be larger than another this will have a similar smell to that And yet an appreciation of the relationship between things does not bring any real understanding until the significance of the object from which the comparison was made is realized But what about the aesthetic instinct? To know that *x* is bigger than *y* when you don't know what *y* is, is of course ultimately to know nothing But if *x* smells better than *y*? Surely that appreciation is a kind of workable knowledge

Callan said aloud "I am foundering in deep epistemological waters "

Steering past a bullock-cart Wacker answered casually 'I beg your pardon?'

"I am writing a book," said Callan

"Oh, well I hope it's a bigger success than your last How many copies *did* they sell of your novel?"

"A ten years' secret But the book I am writing now, unlike the strictly realist novel of young Callan, is a work of the imagination Did you ever reflect.?" Wacker had his hand pressed on the horn button to clear the road of two tongas riding abreast

I suppose, thought Callan suddenly aware of their route, that I should be moderately pleased to be back in town once more Am I? On either side of the tree-lined road was a continuous row of stucco bungalows, each set in its own garden, prim and definitely self-contained The tamarisks and the sweeper-women, the turbaned servants and the orange trees were an incomplete disguise of suburbia An English woman rode by on a bicycle Wacker would say it was just like home But now they were in the main cantonment bazaar, forcing their way through the sluggish traffic that thickened by the cinema and the miniature hotels and thinned off by the Cosmo Book Company In another half mile they would be at the city gates .

Callan thought of the month before him, of the annual liaison visit to headquarters, of the relaxation from out-station duty, of his opportunity to shut himself away to get to grips with the ideas that had taunted him with their inarticulateness during his idle hours in Fort Johnson He twisted his head quickly to assure himself that the typewriter and the black tin trunk of books were safely stowed in the back seat And then he thought of India and the ten years, and made one of his periodical balance sheets As usual his addition was clumsy and he was left dissatisfied with a long column of beginnings not one of which had an ending Always inception without fruition, enthusiasm without achievement, love without the final affection He pressed his feet against the rest and slid deeper into his sheepskin, irritated and confused

The city wall sprang up, twenty feet of mellowed red stone, battlemented, warlike, arrogant, and quite

unsoldiered, betrayed below by the bye laws and cinema posters, insulted in the teeth by the smug octroi post squatting in the gateway tolling the bullock-carts and camel trains. The policeman saluted and the octroi clerk waved the car on obsequiously through the deep gateway into the narrow streets beyond. Callan sat up and guided Wacker through the tortuous maze of alleyways and backdoubles which were to the latter strange and vexing territory. He cursed as he jammed on his brakes to avoid a curious mongrel and set a *burqa* fluttering with his piercing hoot. They pulled up finally in front of a flight of three steps leading to the ill fitting front door of MISTER MOHAMMED LATIF, LL B, PLEADER, as a nameplate announced in black letters on a dirty white enamel ground and Callan jumped out of the car, ran up the steps and, ignoring the obvious bellrope which he remembered not to work, rapped loudly on the door. It fell open into a dark passageway. Callan walked in calling loudly for an answer, and a yawning voice from a room at the end asked "Kaun hai kaun hai?" and summoned Mirza Khan. But Callan did not wait for the servant to appear at his master's orders and called out still more loudly "It's Callan, me, Callan." The door at the end of the passage opened suddenly and Latif, dressed in a *chugha* and fur slippers, a woollen muffler wound about his head, adjusting his crooked pince nez hurriedly threw himself towards his visitor.

"My dear friend," he cried, "my dear friend the pleasure is greater for being unexpected. As you see I was just preparing to go out. But come inside out of this devastating cold, come inside." He held Callan by both hands and gazed at him smiling.

"Do you mind," asked Callan, "if Mirza Khan fetches in my bags?"

Latif followed his glance to the waiting car, dropped his guest's hands in embarrassment immediately his eyes fell on its occupant, and in a sudden fury screamed for his servant. Callan excused himself, returned to the car and thanked Wacker for the lift. When Mirza

Khan had arrived and removed the bags Wacker smiled ironically at Callan and moved off slowly, intent on finding his way back to the cantonment

The room from which Latif had emerged was a dark, grey box with a total of three doors and one small window high up in the wall which gave a dust-filtered version of the sparkling day. In the centre stood a brazier filled with glowing charcoal and by its side a hookah, newly kindled, its arm projecting over one end of a quilt-covered charpoy. There was every indication that Latif had been drowsing and smoking his afternoon away. Under the charpoy was a confused heap of files and papers written in *shikasta*, a pencease, a bottle of green ink, a tattered copy of the Indian Penal Code, a couple of Lahore monthlies still in their postal wrappers, a crumpled newspaper, a glass half full of tea, a packet of cigarettes, and one ragged cotton sock. In one dim corner stood a Victorian tripod which supported a framed oleograph of a bearded man in white garments. These comprised the entire furnishings and adornments of the room. The ceiling, walls and stone floor were not so much hostile to the daylight as quite incapable of reflecting it. The air was heavy with confinement and tobacco smoke and redolent of sleep. Two of the doors held no secrets from Callan (one of them opened on to a covered passageway leading to the summerhouse), but beyond the third lay the women's quarters, the kitchen, the anonymous band of relatives, the staircase to the upper part of the house, all of them denied him during his visits over the past seven years. He had ceased even to be curious and was content to sojourn on the fringes of the household. It was sufficient that Latif entertained him in his private room, this patriarchal box, and that the children came out to talk to him from time to time.

It was clear that the apparition of Wacker had disconcerted Latif. He became aware of the muddle beneath his bed, stooped down to tidy it and succeeded in stirring a cloud of dust, pulled his coat self-consciously about him, offered Callan a seat which did

not exist, and finally once more screamed for Mirza Khan whom he cursed for an idler

"Bring a chair for the saheb Bring two chairs Get some tea, get some Why is nothing ready? Didn't I tell you three days ago that Callan saheb was coming to stay?"

Mirza Khan quickly produced tea, cakes and cigarettes, and reported that the summerhouse was ready for Callan's occupation

'Stupid fellow,' mumbled Latif after him "Do you know, I have been working so terribly hard of late that this afternoon I had to leave my office and come to rest in here That accounts for my dishabille It cannot, of course, excuse my lack of hospitality Who was the man in the car? I fancy I have seen him in the courts at some time or other Work, work, work I am getting too old for it If only I could spend the rest of my allotted days writing verses and talking with wise men But there is all that " He indicated the secret door "One must live for others

Wacker, Wacker? No, I don't think I recognize the name Well have you read the latest news, the Lucknow address?' He groped under the bed and pulled out the crumpled newspaper It was two days old 'Let me read you what this fool has been saying again

\* \* \* \*

During the hours that bridged evening and night they talked, of poetry, the law, the Moghuls, politics of beast man and God, and although at first Wacker, a third irritant party seemed to be present in the restraint upon Latif's habitual enthusiasm, in his strange diffidence and hesitation the old pleader gradually came to ignore the ghost of his unwanted guest and responded as sharply, as sensitively, as keenly as ever before to Callan's thrusts blows, and sallies The hookah and brazier were replenished, food was brought and the dishes removed, an oil lamp was set beside the bed Mirza Khan retired for the night



and the talk continued to be bandied back and forth from tongues that knew the rules and the temper of the minds that controlled them. Such talk, the conversation of two men well versed in one another, comes eventually to be a neutral, common thing, the product of neither but of both, a fusion of two personalities and representative of only one composite personality. Callan drew from and contributed to this pool of words and thoughts, and his dissatisfaction with the purely private part of him, the inalienable personal core of his mind, found balm and peace in the external mental atmosphere created by him and Latif in practised co-operation.

Callan retired along the covered passageway to the summerhouse at two o'clock in the morning, the loser to his host in fatigability. He played at being cold and tired, quickly identified by the light of his candle the massive four-poster bed that filled three-quarters of the floor space, the grimy windows patched with brown paper, the faded green matchboard walls, the octagonal bamboo table, and his luggage stacked in one corner, undressed and smothered himself in the mass of blankets and quilts that made up his bedding. Protected from the draughts that crept about the floor and the gusts of chill air that blew in through a three-inch crack in the door, curled up tightly, after the first paroxysms of reaction, he found warmth and the leisurely comforting sequence of thoughts that should, according to habit, have led downwards to sleep. But somewhere, far on in the unrecorded regions, there came a gap. He threw aside the bedding, rose, dressed himself in all the warm clothing at hand, relit his candle and sat down at the table before a pile of paper and pen and ink. He began to write, doubtful now of sleep but hoping for weariness.

Firstly he wrote a letter, steady, sustained, unathletic, to his mother, telling factually the history of the past two weeks, relating in greater detail his movements and encounters of the day just gone, depicting Wacker and Latif, the obsession of one for his con-

mines, the political preoccupations of the other, the significance of both in India. And an accession of tenderness carried him over from this letter to the beginning of a second where soon he was again abruptly pulled up short by the peculiar obstruction of this night.

He lit a cigarette and snuffed the candle. The few square feet of the summerhouse expanded into the vast country of mountain and desert, forest and field where dwell the forty crores. He was beset by agoraphobia and the terrible isolation of the traveller. Hydra-headed multiplicity sprang at him and he fought till exhaustion sought prayer. Unity, unity, blessed unity. Restore me with your healing oneness. Bless me with the power of single mindedness. Let me not wander for ever through the perplexity of this wilderness of irreconcilability. Let there be only one man, one woman, one country of the living, one truth, one lie, one way from which my feet cannot turn aside. Mark down the evil which is disparity, incongruity, disunity, inequality, dichotomy, divagation, contradiction, discord. The puzzlement of the child who discovers that the smooth tongue goes with the harsh hand grows to the pain of the man who learns that cunning dwells in the house of goodwill, that the honest deed lies with the sinister motive. One man is good, many are evil. Power disrupts, organization amasses stupidity. Jack at school was worried by the thought of the *svelte* beauty in her privy, Jack, a man, cannot reconcile the reality of his senses with the perfection of his imagination. Richard is maddened by the knowledge that universal results are the fruit of trivial causes, that the casual word breeds dogma, the careless act rules empires. John, honest John, has made an irregular union with necessity and brought forth the bastard hate-child Compromise, multiplying the disparateness of the universe by two. Nations, doctrines, gods, cultures, tongues. Millions to the power of millions. Fear, hate, madness. Latif sleeping the light slumber of late middle age.






"*Double-roti* and three-quarter boiled eggs," he said, offering to place the tray on Callan's lap. "Latif saheb presents his compliments and regrets that he has had to go away early on business, but perhaps the saheb would like to sleep on in this cold weather."

Latif, unusually spruce and affected, sat facing Wacker who rose immediately. Callan entered the room saying, "I really didn't want to disturb you, especially as Latif tells me that you are not too . . . But you know," and he laughed a little uncomfortably, "Eveline was hellishly annoyed with me for not asking you to come to stay with us and made me promise I'd come round first thing in the morning to remedy the omission. And . . . and anyway there's another piece of shop I'd like to discuss."

Callan was at once restored completely by the self-imposed responsibility to ease the strain and hostility between the two men, and, preventing Latif from leaving the room, he said in as hearty a manner as he could master "My dear Latif, just see how impossible this fellow is! I no sooner get into town than he pesters

me with his confounded coal mines I do believe that Wacker here thinks that coal, its development and exploitation, is the answer to all the ills that flesh is heir to. How are we to cure him of his crass materialism? And really, Wacker, it's most kind of both you and Eveline to invite me but old Latif and I are committed by our friendship to a month of tussling and altercation. Next time I promise you. Well, and what have you two been thrashing out while I've been idling about? Or have you just been sitting with your hands folded like a couple of uncomfortable school boys?"

Latif, sensing his friend's partiality and protection, said solemnly but with a trace of humour "Mr Wacker has been attempting, in vain I need scarcely add, to persuade me of the inadequacy of purely political action."

"Well," replied Wacker, "that's actually only the half of it. But I must get along now even though I return empty handed to my wife."

"I am sure," said Latif quickly, "that someone must be waiting for me in my office. If you will excuse me gentlemen."

"Oh, then he can wait. I'll just see Wacker to the door and I'll be back at once. But as they stood by the doorway Wacker deferred his business talk and left hurriedly, saying, as a parting shot, "I hope you'll be all right soon."

When Callan returned to the room he found Latif stretched out upon his bed, already divested of his formal clothing, reading a large leather bound book.

"Tell me," asked Callan, "have I been misbehaving myself? Am I supposed to be a sick man?"

"Nonsense, my dear friend. Upon my word this Hindu law of inheritance is a complicated affair. You will find this remarkably interesting. I am now conducting a case in which the son of the widow of "

"Latif, you and I are going for a long walk in the stimulating winter sunshine."

"But you. I am getting far too old for protracted

exercise Let us rather remain here and talk Have you had your breakfast? Mirza Khan, who can indeed be most attentive to the people he likes, took great pains over your bread "

"Very well, let's talk here. A good chap, Mirza Khan Tell me first what is wrong with me "

Latif removed his pince-nez and gazed at his questioner firmly "Absolutely nothing at all, I assure you," he said "I suppose Mr Wacker was under the impression that only an indisposition could keep you in bed on so fine a morning " And he returned to his book

Callan sat silent for some time, thinking deeply, remembering strenuously, and finally said quietly "Latif, I had a bad dream last night " Latif turned the page and appeared to listen indifferently "I think I must be disintegrating for lack of faith Now do put that book away and tell me about men who had the kind of faith that makes the world work, or look as if it worked Tell me about the Sufis, about Akbar, about anyone who found unity in God or power or logic And if a man ever made a unity of what he saw in this chaotic country I must know about him What is the secret ?"

Latif closed his book "If I say that I am aware of the problem and am indifferent, will you be shocked at my lack of anxiety? My countrymen accept disunity and chaos as inevitable and even desirable The secret does not exist Here is a brilliant winter's day that you profess so much to enjoy Why not accept it? Mirza Khan, Mirza Khan! Fetch the saheb some hot water Now, my good friend, get shaved, put on your colourful clothes I will get my coat and we shall go for a long walk No, no! You have insisted so many times in the past on the invigorating qualities of a sunny winter's morning that I have come at last to believe you We shall go out "

And as they walked briskly through the streets Latif said "You are an excellent friend for you do what I tell you !"

Feeling the cold air on his face Callan replied  
 Damn Wacker Damn the fatuous book Latif I  
 love you !”

“In that kind of mood my dear friend, I am quite  
 prepared to pursue your shadows’

*Sisir Ghose*

## A GENERALIZED FRAGMENT OF OUR AESTHETE

A mod n house  
 Mebbe a small car,  
 Well furnished drawing and library rooms,  
 The table lamp, symbol of midnight mysteries,  
 The gramophone in its proper corner  
 (Packed music, ready to unroll itself, whenever willed),  
 Some high brow paintings,  
 Cubist, Vorticist, Surrealist or Suprematist may be,  
 Salvador Dali wriggling on the crucified (neatly, so  
 slenderly !) wall

So chic  
 In the midst of all this reclining sits  
 Our comfortable aesthete,  
 Bejewelled in his borrowed plumes of generalizations  
 On—  
 Life,  
 Literature  
 And all that

A personal friend, I admit  
 (An *alter ego* you guess !)  
 With his wan, far-off lackadaisical smile  
 With a mediaeval lily in his hand,  
 To complete the picture, I mean



## RETURN, TO SUNLIGHT

### (1) NO WHITE CLIFFS

O H, the sun !  
Ceylon, where I was born—and its days of never-failing sun ! India ! where the very breeze comes from some colossal furnace ! Black skins, brown skins, perspiring skins ! Multicoloured clothes which take up shafts of sunlight and hurl them back against your eyes ! And dust everywhere ! Dust ! Dust, which dances in the noonday sun as if the quintessence of devildom was on carnival Dust, which becomes mud mixed with the filth of man and beast when the rain falls

For all that let me be there ! Let me be a part of that scene, inhaling that dust, being scorched by that sun, surrounded by flies and filth and noise

Let me change these heavy clothes, overcoat and gloves, for transparent cotton *dhori* and *kurtha* Let me change these shoes for sandals Let there be no more hands in overcoat pockets for nine months of the year, and let my poor nose have a rest, and let there be less handkerchiefs for the laundry

Oh to get away from these grey skies, now infested with barrage balloons, from sandbagged streets bad enough without ankle-deep winter s slush Above all to get away from this Return to Darkness !

Surely all this trouble is worth while for escape Passports and Exit Permits, the red tape of that frowning ugly woman in the black dress at the French Consulate who interrupts the young clerk to tell him that a transit visa for three days in Paris is all that I should get, the equally formidable



questionnaire (not in duplicate though) at the pleasanter Italian Consulate, the innumerable times you have to queue up at this barrier and that, the having to dip into this pocket and pull out such and such papers and into the other pocket for your Passport and tickets for the hundredth time, the farewells at Victoria in the dark—Shelvankar and Iqbal Singh to see me off—the shuttered and dim-lighted train gliding stealthily through the night to New Haven.

That long queue at New Haven That thick-lipped, coarse-faced Gujerati—"Indian Student" written all over him—in Homburg hat showing the Customs man his cheap paper-backed novel and asking him whether it was all right to take it with one, simply in order to impress the other fellow with the kind of literature he was used to, the Customs man who had already passed him stopping to turn over its pages, holding up the much-suffering long queue, that night's waiting in the freezing cold in the ferry steamer at New Haven, full of soldiers below deck sprawled all over the floor and in bunks and on tables, and so soon after their heartiness at the bar, and the urinals overflowing with vomit Yes, it was worth it all to Return to Sunlight

And then Dieppe. No matter what hell one goes through to reach it, that exhilaration one feels every time on seeing French soil and faces Paris And Brooke Farrar and André Delfau waiting to meet me André in uniform

Now one has forgotten London, War, Blackouts, Rations, one's beloved and friends whom one had left to face it out while one made one's escape Driving to Brooke's studio in St Germain through a Paris which except for the unusual number of men in uniform has not lost any of its normal appearance and gaiety Lunch in that restaurant in the Cathedral Square at St Germain, with French wine on which one does not get drunk, unless one tries very hard, and with each glass of which one appreciates the world and its dwellers better and better Jovneau, an older artist friend of

Brooke s, and another man, a former French jockey, as company at lunch Afterwards Brooke's studio and his paintings and his enthusiastic reminiscences of Ceylon and his envying me for going back to lands of the Sun

In Venice, in the evening, in the rain The Grand Canal in a dull mist and drizzle The only bright spot, the Hotel Commercio, clean and warm and welcome Efficient Austrian maid who is a collector of stamps There are two Punjabis, one, in a pair of Wellingtons in which I believe he even went to bed (He wore them on deck every day until we had passed Suez) They try hard not to catch my eye lest I should greet them and make friends

The following morning it is still raining I am in a panic because all my money (and very little of it) is in francs—and neither Cook's nor the Italian Bank would touch them British Consul just as unhelpful except for suggesting that I go to French Consulate, which I do, and there the young attaché gives me lire in exchange but at a much lower rate than usual, which he couldn't help

In the late afternoon the rain stops, though there is enough of it left on the streets and squares The covered walks along the shops round St Mark's Square are equally wet and damp Within their shops the curio dealers stand disconsolate, dressed in fur-collared overcoats, and if you stop for a second to look at their windows they switch on extra lights switching them off immediately you turn away Not more than a dozen people inside St Mark's Cathedral—a few black-garbed women scattered about on the benches evidently engrossed in prayer, others, including a couple of youngish men, obviously seeking shelter and a seat Guides outside the Doge's Palace offer their services unhelpfully, and one speaking good Guide English tells me when I blame the rain for not wanting to sightsee, "Escape it" His grin meant more than one way of escape

The leader of a crowd of three girls (presently there

is a fourth) asks me whether I am from Libya, and wants to be treated to coffee. I blame the franc for having to forego their company.

Along the canals the gondolas lie huddled together, and along the waterfront of the Grand Canal rows of them laplap against the long poles stuck in to form a stockade. On the Grand Canal a determined young couple being rowed inexpertly by a shivering young boatman.

I hie myself to the Olympia Cinema which opens its doors at three-thirty. It is *Alf's Button Afloat* which I had seen in London more than two years back. Here it is called "The Six Lunatics Aboard" (*Sei Matti A Bordo. It Filma Della Risata E Dell'Allegria*). Italian suits the Commander of the warship in that scene where he gets angry. And the Italian sound synchronization makes the Commander's daughter look more coquettish and alluring than she did in English. In Italian a girl's pout can almost be heard. A language essentially for a girl to coquette in, or one to sound angry in. The Crazy Gang's antics keep the audience amused, and a young girl with an older woman seated behind me laugh throughout the whole film. As the circus horses appear in that comic hunt scene the older woman cries out "Bella!"

By the time I come out of the cinema the crowds have grown and promenade up and down that length of St. Mark's Square on which the restaurants and cafés are. For the price of a coffee (three and a half lire with a half lira tip) I watch the promenade from behind the glass shutters of the Elect Apertivo. Young men in uniform everywhere. How loudly male these Italians are! I note the Balbao beard on more than one youthful chin. Only the two Venetian policemen, black-helmeted, black-caped, pacing slowly up and down, their hands clasped behind, seem subdued and unwarmed by their uniforms or by any inner fire of patriotism.

By seven o'clock the crowds begin to thin, and by eight they are quite dispersed. Only the demi-monde

and a few men are about. By nine, after the trains have unloaded their passengers from France and Switzerland, Venice is nearly asleep. It is so at least on this February evening in 1910.

We embark in a splash of sunshine. I walk from the hotel to the quay, my two cases being carried by the tallest and oldest porter in Venice, a very El Greco-like creature. He has them slung by a strap over his shoulder, and I have to walk very slowly to keep his pace. Across squares, over bridges, along narrow paths skirting the walls of houses, and so on to the Customs shed. Several Chinese, a Goanese with a medical degree from Edinburgh and a French girl bride from Boulogne, a young Moslem playboy with a slender, fair skinned, bobbed haired, fur-coated wife with big eyes and a bold rouge which makes me mistake her for a Creole and him for a West Indian. These two have been in Switzerland, and she is a niece of the Aga Khan, her husband tells me. Nephews of Rabindranath Tagore and nieces of the Aga Khan have been so prolific on the Continent that I am unimpressed though I suppose she was a genuine Aga Khan niece. Her husband sounds so very knowledgeable about Indian courts and princes that I call him "Nawab".

The reception on the *Conte Rosso* very friendly and designed to raise one's spirits. The thick lipped Gujarati already throwing his weight about and, in the rush of passenger lists being checked up, tables and cabins being allotted, he buttonholes the chief steward and asks for a chess board. Many Jewish refugees, chiefly from Austria—an attractive girl named Lisbeth, with a fine intelligent face, her beauty marred by a slight limp, and her mother, among them. They are going to Shanghai where her father awaits them. The others are going to Manilla. There is also a vivacious young Finnish woman, Mme Helen Fan, with two lovely sloe-eyed boys, going to Chungking to her Chinese husband who is in the Finance Ministry there.

"Wellington Boots" and the thick lipped Gujarati are among those at my table in the Tourist Class. As

a special concession as an author I get a fine, single cabin in the Second Class · but I must eat in the Tourist Class.

We sail in a generous blaze of sunshine. Inwardly I say goodbye to Europe—and seemingly no regrets either

## (2) NEARER TO YOU, MY KINSMEN

From the ship's library I borrow Prokosch's *Asiatics*. It shows remarkable insight into Asiatic character for one who, I believe, has not set foot in Asia And isn't Prokosch American? I would be the last one to identify an author with his characters, but there is no gainsaying that Prokosch, disappointed with the getting and spending civilization of Europe, thinks well of Asia and credits Asia with something more enduring than Europe I have pictured Prokosch to myself, and he is the exact opposite of Dr Ainger Prokosch to my mind is a healthy, red-blooded, normal fellow, not quite the hair-on-the-chest Hemingway hero, but quite pleasant and sociable The Ainger type is frequently met with in Asia Sometimes they are medical missionaries in China, when discovered by Mr Somerset Maugham they are invariably sprawled on a mat on the floor in some dive in Singapore, an opium pipe beside them, and a native woman with betel-juice-stained teeth in the background, sometimes they are District Commissioners in Burma, or Collectors or District Judges in India—divorced or separated from their wives, or their wives have run away with somebody or have refused to return after their last visit to England, frequently they are in charge of "art treasures" or libraries of Maharajahs As a rule they are sexually dried-up, with jaundiced skin and nicotine-stained finger nails They are definitely misfits in Europe where a man must assert himself if he is to survive but in Asia, for all their defeatist outlook, they are, by the mere fact of being European or American (and also

because there are more cretins, idiots and sub humans in Asia), something of heroes, if not to anybody else, to their servants And this is what Prokosch's Dr Ainger says

Everything that's nasty here well look around, it's recent, you'll observe and it's Western Don't you agree? Every thing that's old is going The temples are being deserted the fields are rotting the forests are falling, the old quarters in the cities are growing vile And why? Because we won't keep our dirty panic-stricken paws off the East! We insist on giving them our stinking progress Away with the Vedas and the Peace Everlasting Bring in the Fords and the factories What's a bit of faith compared to a fresh oil well or a new road? Civilization Rot All it means is making money and making things easier for those who've made it and killing the spirit in themselves as well as in everybody else Kill every thing that's brought them peace Well well see who wins in the end I'm not so sure myself Asia has one or two weapons we never thought of She can stand a lot She's got something we can't comprehend

Well, to say the least this is a cock-eyed attitude, only different from the "Hassan" or "Arabian Nights" or "Chu-Chin Chow" approach, and no more complimentary or helpful to Asia You cannot be just to Asia by being just unjust to Europe

Not everything that's nasty in Asia is Western Asia has specialized in things nasty and thrived on nastiness ages before there was a West except in the geographical sense You might, if you wish to be very generous, say that it is Asia's outstanding achievement—that of having inured itself to nastiness over centuries of practice

There is a peculiar insensitiveness to ugliness, to crudeness, to incongruity, to cruelty, to dirt and filth among Asiatics, cheek by jowl with a natural, instinctive, unaware-of predilection for beauty (but not as distinct from ugliness), for colour (but not by choice or preference, rather through a process of adaptability, so that yellows and greens and reds and blacks are predominant), for sound (that is either utterly elemental and unsubdued such as that of drums, or for sounds that are plaintive rather than

poignant, suggestive of that muted throbbing there is in the Indian twilight between sunset and the almost immediate night), for tenderness (not because it is a divine quality but because there is an animal tenderness in all Asiatics such as that of the cow while it licks its new-born calf, tenderness that is likewise expressed through touch and therefore through physical nearness and blood relationship), for sentiment (but not for romantic reasons nor because the whole world is kin through that weakness, but because there is always among all Asiatics a very on-the-surface sentiment, easily provoked like the excitability of those passion-filled, large breasts of Oriental women), for justice (not from precedent, nor from an inviolate creed, nor because the wells of the human heart have been touched, but because it fits in with the mood, a maudlin mood most likely, dependent on the constellations, and whether it is the time of the new moon or full moon), for kindness (not because one suffers with the tortured, going through the same agonies as the other, but because of some taboo, religious or tribal)

Such is the East and such the virtues of Asiatics

And, if any Asiatics prove exceptional, it is, believe me, not from any inherent instinct, nor from some reincarnated predisposition, but because these have come in contact with the thought of the West and have adopted the values of the West and move and have their being within that orbit. There are such Asiatics, but not those who undergo a metamorphosis at the hands of their tailor, or by adopting some hide-bound dogma of Europe, but those who have become convinced that Asia needs redemption very quickly, and that it can be redeemed only by examining its values and standards and by being critical of itself without mercy, without puerile pleas of self-extenuation, or of victimization at the hands of Europe

These impatient, iconoclastic Asiatics want to belong to Asia, want to belong to it very much, but to do so they want to make Asia clean and orderly and beautiful through Man's efforts as against Nature's indulgence.

These few are the martyrs of Asia, and you might find them in an obscure village in Japan or Korea, or in a town in Indo-China, or Siam, or India. They are uncompromising—they want neither to borrow gold from Moscow, nor buy airplanes from Mr Ford—nor do they have any use for the sanctimonious head blessing, hand rubbing, we-can-be-good if we have nothing to do with Europe gang of pseudo-ascetics, the Burlaps of Asia. They are individualists—they move no Resolutions in no Congress or Conference, they give no communiqués to the Press, in fact they are unknown and obscure except for being regarded within their small communities as anti social rebels or misfits or as the not all there type.

Every community of human beings living in any historical region of the earth has some distinct virtues, and as such Asia is full of virtues—but these are those virtues which grow unnoticed like weeds in a neglected garden and noticed only by the stranger from abroad who recognizes in those self same weeds some newly discovered efficacy. We in Asia have ceased to cultivate virtues for social ends or because they lend the individual dignity and grace and a moral stature.

No, the temples are not being deserted, we patronize them as much as ever, only now we place before our altars boxes with a slit lettered in English CHARITY BOX, but it is silly to blame the English alphabet or Europe for this. The fields are rotting because a generation used to the speed of cars and trains—not to speak of airplanes, has neither the patience nor the aptitude for wielding the hoe hour after hour from sunrise to sunset. Give them tractors, whether made by Ford or Vickers or made in Japan it doesn't matter, and supply their villages with urban amenities even at the risk of these ceasing to be villages and the fields will thrive once again. The old quarters in the cities are growing vile simply because they have outlasted their usefulness and are waiting to be razed to the ground. True enough there might be a beautiful old mosque with spacious sandy courtyard, or a temple breathing an



old-world atmosphere, but you can be sure that people urinate and excrete into the stagnant drain that skirts that same mosque or temple. So I say, raze the old quarters to the ground, retaining your temple or mosque or other historical monument, lay drains, install water and sewerage, and altogether build a new city around the old landmarks

No, let us not blame the West for everything. It has enough of vileness, but we have just as much without being so ready to accept the other brand as well. Progress is nobody's to give or take. It is there. Either we fall in with it and survive proudly, beautifully, and with Nature's consent and God's blessing. Or we treat it with a sneaking awe like the stay-at-home sister regarding the sister who has become a successful strumpet in the city and has come to the village on a visit.

As for making money—give Asiatics half the chance of, half the taste of, making money and they would behave like those pigs outside uncovered latrines in India and Ceylon. You have only to watch the few Asiatics who have appropriated the golden touch. In the West they *use* money—whether it be to buy a pearl necklace for the most expensive prostitute, or to build a sunken garden, or to own a Picasso, or to buy the newest make of car, or to vie with the Joneses in all their expensive vulgarity. In the East they *hoard* it, or at best invest it in jewellery to carry which their women have to make bigger slits in their ears and pierce holes in their noses. As for Peace—the Peace of Asia is the peace that descends upon a cemetery when the last grave-digger has stacked away his pick and shut the gates and gone home. Yes, Asia can stand a lot. So can the dromedary. So can the ox, and other castrated animals.

In the meantime let me sample some of these fellow-Asiatics who are returning home laden with the benefits of a European sojourn. I have already mentioned the young Gujerati, who is so keen on being thought a devil of a fellow. He knows everybody at the Radio

Club in Bombay, Mr Jinnah's daughter by his first wife will be waiting to meet him at the pier (he says), he refers to men and women well known in Bombay society by their first names, he speaks of "Madhuri", of the Sarabhai family, as if he had known her from infancy, he gives his Bombay telephone number to all and sundry taking care to add that he might be going to his Kathiawar home after a day or two in Bombay. As for that home—its architecture and modern appurtenances, they are—well, it would take pages to quote him. Poor fellow, let him indulge his vanity—one can easily guess the kind of home he comes from, the scene over which his fat paunched papa presides, sitting cross-legged the day long, chewing *pan supari* and spitting into an always three-quarters full spittoon. Here in the Tourist Class Smoking Room sitting with a whisky and soda before him, swapping yarns with other young Indians about their sex affairs in England, he is a very devil of a fellow.

Then there is a Desastha Brahmin Mahratta who has recently added his lustrous name to the roll of the Middle Temple. He too sits in the smoke laden, low ceilinged Smoking Room morning and afternoon with a long whisky and soda ever at his elbow. On the third day he gets a liver and has to keep to his cabin until we reach Port Said. Then there are four young Indian women, one a Parsi who has been studying art in Paris, and the other three Mahratta returning after courses in gynaecology at Dublin. One of them very daringly wears slacks much to the disgust of the more conservative Indians. And then there is the Bengali gang very cliquey. There is no shipload of passengers between India and Europe without its quota of Bengalis. There is no type of Indian who suffers so much from an inferiority complex as the Bengali. All their so-called "Terrorism", their deeds of derring-do spring from that. On the whole Indians are an unself-conscious race, but the "educated" Bengali is a very self-conscious creature. In this group too there is the inevitable barrister, just called to the Bar,

and returning to kith and kin with satisfaction writ large on his face. He is a slender young fellow, amiable and ready to be friendly. Already he wears the black alpaca coat of his profession. Then there is the young Goanese doctor with his French bride. He tells me of his meeting his girl at the Student Movement House in London, his determined wooing of her, her parents' opposition, their consent and blessing in the end, the marriage at the Roman Catholic Church in Boulogne followed by a civil marriage in London. He sounds very uxorious, ever anticipating the temptations a young wife, if unaccompanied, might be trapped into, and he is determined never to let her travel alone. He is quite happy when I tell him that they look a well-matched couple.

But who is this strange bird with a beatific grin on his face? Tall, thick-set, dark-skinned, dressed in a woolly, chocolate-coloured cloak with scapula, tonsured but with hair grown over tonsure? He is a man of God—that is easy to see. It is also easy to see that he likes to make friends. Well, we introduce ourselves. He is Father Eleseus, a Travancore Malayali returning home after a ten years' stay in Rome. He belongs to the "Order of the Discalced Carmelites". He pronounces the "a" in "Discalced" with typical Travancorean emphasis. A south Indian pronounces the "a" in such words as *walk* and *talk* like the "a" in bath.

Eleseus tells me that he has made a special study of Christian mystics. I am interested because I have also studied to some extent the mystics of Asia and Europe. I ask him whether he has compared Sri Chaitanya, Ramdas, Ramakrishna, and other Hindu mystics with their European counterparts? No. They are nothing more than names to this Indian, whose ancestors two generations back accepted an Europeanized Oriental faith. No use talking to him about those Persian mystics, Sana'i, 'Attar, Mawlavi, Hafiz, or Jami, not to mention the less orthodox mystics of Europe such as the Jewish Hillel, or the English Blake, or those tabooed by Rome—Molinos and Guyon.

How much in common the mystics of East and West have! St Thomas Aquinas said "Nothing moves for the sake of moving, but only that it may reach some goal all these movements must come to an end" Ramdas, the untutored Mahratta mystic who lived in the seventeenth century said "Living beings exist in orderly arrangement of time, which is divided into morning, noon, and evening" And how well might one compare the sentiments of Mme Guyon and Sri Chaitanya He was born at Nadiya in Bengal in 1485 Said Mme Guyon

After Thou hast wounded me so deeply (as I have described) Thou didst begin, Oh my God to withdraw Thyself from me and the pain of Thy absence was the more bitter to me because Thy presence was so sweet to me.

And Sri Chaitanya (as translated by D C Sen)

I remember the day when we loved each other on the banks of the Reva Today the sweet breeze blows The Malati blooms and the Kadamba flower drenched with dew sends its fragrance and you, my beloved are present before me here and so am I before you the same that I ever was But yet does my heart long for a union with you in the shades of the cane bowers on the banks of the Reva

Or how aptly does the psalm—*Quoniam non cognovi litteraturam introibo in potentias Domini* (Because I have not known learning I will enter into the powers of the Lord)—apply to that more recent Bengali mystic, Ramakrishna!

But our Elesenses of Travancore, and elsewhere, spend years in Rome wearing blinkers, deliberately shutting out all knowledge of their own inheritance and civilization so that they might come back and proselytize and replace animism and ignorance (which can be justified under certain conditions) by well-calculated bigotry and dogma No I have no patience with proselytizers and bigots whether they be Moslems or Buddhists or Hindus or Christians or Jews There is one Sun for this Earth and one source of Light No man may imprison a ray of that sun or a segment of that light and claim that it is self begot and the only Every ray

of light brings us nearer to a realization of that great and overpowering source, and therefore there is no piece of knowledge that the human mind has discovered which we can afford to ignore. But Rome teaches otherwise, and Eleseus with a fatuous grin on his face and mouthing his broad vowels repeats parrotwise the things he has learnt and which in turn he will teach to some poor benighted creatures after they have been bribed with the usual bowl of soup.

Much against my wish I have been dragged into discussing religion, and I reply to Eleseus. "No religion, not even Hinduism, so vast and comprehensive in itself, is so emphatic as to say that it is the sole possessor of the truth."

To which Eleseus "We only have the courage to say it."

And I "Fools have a courage where wiser men are hesitant. You have heard that saying, 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread'."

Eleseus says nothing in reply but grins weakly and turns to listen to the Goanese who is saying something and who with his wife has been present at this discussion. Each time the Goanese opens his mouth he "Fathers" Eleseus. The two of them discuss Padua, the Goanese regretting he did not visit it, all the more so because his name too is Anthony. They get thick into a discussion about interred bodies, and Eleseus says. "I saw two bodies at Padua—of Mary Magdalene and of St Therèse. Very nice."

At Brindisi two Italian Jesuits, dressed in cream-coloured cloaks, and bursting with fat as might have been those victims specially fattened for some temple sacrifice of the Incas, come on board. They go into the First Class Lounge and order a bottle of chianti. They are going to Orissa. God help famine-stricken Orissa.

The "Nawab" and his wife (they have in the meantime changed their cabins from Second to First class) and I get talking. She speaks of Chevrolets and Buicks and Indian Palace life and of a real Nawab to

whom she had once been engaged. He tries his best to dodge her and go ashore and just as he succeeds the ship draws up its gangplank. I ask him how long he has been married and he says, "Three years and that is too long."

After Brindisi I make the acquaintance of a very charming and jolly Filipino in the Second Class. He too has been in Rome, and wears the black habit of a Roman Catholic priest but neither a Romish education nor all those years in Rome have suppressed his gaiety or exuberance or sociability. I like the young Reverend Ramon Pamplona who is going home to Iloilo in the Philippine Islands. He corrects my impression that all Filipinos eat dog flesh. No, it is only a few primitive tribes. His first ambition had been to become a musician. It had cost him much heart burning to forsake that ambition for the priesthood. I sympathize with him and wish that even now he would return to his first ambition. He takes me into the First Class drawing room and plays on the piano a piece he had composed representing a dialogue between himself and a friend of his after he had decided to become a priest. To my musically inexperienced ear it sounds very good. He plays other pieces for me. He tells me of dances and "rendezvous" of youths and maidens in the Philippines. I have taken a liking to Filipinos even when they are habited as Roman Catholic priests.

\* \* \* \*

We reach Port Said

THERE was a chink of light underneath the door. It fitted ill on its hinges, its decorations were crude, the work of some village craftsman, lotus and leaf and arabesque, blackened by generations of hands. It had been pushed and pulled and cajoled and kicked until it had developed dints and a personality, like the family ox, which laboured and was beaten habitually.

Ram Singh stood behind the trunk of the peepul tree that shadowed the outer walls of the house. From behind the door he could hear the *shoon-shoon* of a woman's tears, like water falling from the Persian wheel.

That was nothing. Women would cry. They were monsoon clouds, heavy with rain.

He had heard the whole quarrel. The Thakurji had come home from the fields in a black temper, and had banged open the door. "Bring me some food, you who add to my troubles with your tears. Bring it quickly. Why is not the fire lit? Is this the way to welcome me home?"

And he had given her a push. She ran out for a second to clutch a log from the wood-pile at the side of the house.

It was then that Ram Singh had recognized her. Miserable though she was, without colour, in a dirty green-bordered sari, there was something in the liquid movement of her arms and the clash of her cheap metal bangles that told him that his search was ended.

Over a year ago Ram Singh had been sitting with his guru at a fair where the holy men congregated. He had been a very new chela, self-conscious in his freshly-dyed saffron clothes.

It was then he had seen her for the first time.

She was with some older women, and there was a mercurial lustrous border of silver curving round her sweet and silly face, too young for that of a bride, too old for that of a girl. It was this mixture of sweetness and sadness and mere empty headed silliness that had first drawn his eyes to her.

"She is a silver fish, a 'brainless shining fish swimming in the stream,'" he said to himself, half aloud.

Like a fish, she had round expressionless eyes and slender sensual movements. No man could resist her or fail to see the weakness in the terror and invitation of her eyes.

'Silly silver fish Silly silver fish' he muttered.

'My son, fetch me some water to drink. By serving the guru your soul shall find freedom from the witcheries of the world.'

He looked up with a start into the eyes of the old man, and he knew that he had seen him looking at the woman, and knew all about Ram Singh's secret little *mantra* that went on saying itself inside him. "Silly silver fish Silly silver fish."

Grabbing the brass pot, he ran towards the tap, pushing insolently to the front of the sweating group of people round it. When he returned, she had gone away. He could not find her anywhere.

\* \* \* \*

So Ram Singh went away too. He could not seek for salvation any more because of that silver fish of a woman. She stood between him and his new freedom, she chained him to life, she made his heart beat disconcertingly.

He took the road from village to village, dusty, endless and the same, today, tomorrow, yesterday they were all one. He sat by the village wells in the



evening, and watched the women come to fill their pitchers.

"Young," they said, "and so handsome How did such a youth find his way to God?" And he would shut his eyes in torment and call on the name of Rama "Ram Ram Ram Ram . . ." It was a long river of sound There were waves in it, up and down, up and down There were eddies in it, there were fishes, silver fishes, silly silver fishes Silver fish "O Ram Ram Ram "

And he knew that he was still lost and away from his guru, and he would separate himself from the crowd of women fiercely and take the open road again, stumbling away, away from he knew not what

It went on for over a year like that There was not a village within a radius of fifty miles that he had not seen, and not a stream that he had not followed

It was in the monsoon season, when the peacocks were spreading their tails—O most gorgeous, O most beautiful, O more lovely than the name of God—when the peahens were crying in their piercing human voices, running quickly on their thin legs over the new green grass, flying on to the walls and into the trees, when the clouds were armies and heavenly rivers, that Ram Singh came to a village he had visited many times An ordinary village, with a banyan tree and an old well He turned towards the river, and walked along a narrow path he had avoided before It looked drier than the lower road which was already half-covered with flood water. At the end of the path there was a rough cottage with a carved door, very old and grown black with use

There he had stood under the tree, and there he had found her—his silver fish Like Bagla Bhagat, the Heron, he stood on one leg, as though absorbed in God, but through one eye he was looking at his fish, and wondering how he could catch her, could see her wriggling delightfully in his sharp beak

The Thakurji finished his food, and with many

grunts got up to close the door. It showed a long line of light like the gold band on the dark hair of a bride.

She had begun to cry, ceaselessly. "Let me go to my sister's house. You never let me see my dear ones. I am a prisoner in your home, and you leave me alone and hungry while you go gaming with your wicked friends."

"Shut up. No more of your crying and gabbling. Let me sleep, my Ram Pyari. Come along."

"Let me go home to my sister," she had cried, and there was a dull thud, and then many more thuds and cries as his rough fists met her yielding body. At last he left the house with a curse, and was gone towards the village.

The *shoon shoon* of her crying still came from behind the door. She was praying too desperately, "Ram, Ram, may I find the way to my sister's door?"

The name brought him to life again. "Bibi, in the name of Rama give food to a holy man. I am hungry."

The door opened, and frightened eyes looked out. "I have a few pieces of bread and some vegetables. Take them." She offered them to him simply.

"My name is Ram Singh," he said.

"And mine is Ram Pyari," she replied, like a child.

"You were crying to go to your sister. Tell me, where does she live?"

"O many miles away, on the borders of the Punjab, but I want to see her, I want to see her." And she cried again.

"Ram Pyari, your name is of Rama, and mine too. I am a follower of a great guru. I will take you to your sister. Trust yourself in my hands."

Her startled eyes looked up to his and she wriggled delightfully (like the fish in the heron's beak, he thought, like the fish in the heron's beak). She leaned towards him with new resolution. "I will come," she said. And as if to show she meant it, she got up and pulled out her trunk from the corner, and began stuffing cloth into an old sheet. Last of all she dragged

out the veil with the silver border, and knotted the whole into a bundle

Ram Singh walked into the dark garden. She followed him and shut the door. "Where are we going? Which way are we going?" There was some vagueness in her voice, like a woman in a dream.

"We are going to your sister's. But first let us take the road by the river and find a place to stay the night."

They found a cave in the river bank, and he lay there by her side and slept dreamlessly in great and unutterable content.

In the morning she got up very early, when cold tremors of wind agitated the river and, drawing the folds of her dirty sari closer round her, she bathed until she gasped in the refreshing water. When Ram Singh turned over on the sand he saw her standing on the edge of the water with the sari sticking wetly to her golden skin.

"What are you doing up so early?" he shouted.

"I was dirty," she said simply, working her short toes in and out of the wet sand. He noticed, with a shock, that the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet were paler than her other skin, like the belly of a fish.

She turned her head away and blushed, because he had seen her for the first time in the light of day, and she did not know his face and his searching eyes.

"I have no shoes," she said timidly. "I left them behind. And they were old shoes anyway, and broken. I cannot walk without shoes on these river stones."

He looked at her half-stupified. "But I cannot give you shoes. I am a wandering man with no money. You must wait until you get to your sister's."

"But my sister is a long way away." She turned towards him with feminine cajolery. "A little pair of shoes. But surely you could get them for me if you really wanted to."

He turned away, evading her. "Let us start. We must get along to the next village, if we are to get some food."

"Now tell me," he began, as they followed the course of the river, 'where does your sister live? What is the name of her village? What is the name of the town near it?'"

She was silent, and looked at him with her small round eyes as though not understanding. "I cannot remember the name," she said tiredly after thinking. 'But it was a good clean village, and there was a temple there, with a big tank where we bathed. And near it there was a very old peepul tree.'

"But there are many such villages," he said. "How can I know which one it is?"

"You will find it," she said trustingly.

So soon they forgot to talk of the sister, and it was as though she had left the house of the Thakurji and closed the door on her old life, and that was all she cared about it. But the new life troubled her.

'When will you give me a room with a place to cook food in it?' she would say. 'I don't like eating other women's food. I am not a beggar woman.'

\* \* \* \*

Then into Ram Singh's mind came a great agony and a great struggle. Ever since he had left his mother and the buffaloes and the tasks of his boyhood, he had not thought of food and the things a man must do if he is to keep a woman. He had taken Ram Pyari as a magpie might take a silver trinket, because it glittered and he could not resist it.

"But I am a beggar," he said, "and I cannot give you such things."

And she would cry quietly and eat other women's food without appetite and grow pale. At night, as she bathed in the streams and at the wells, she would again become his silver fish and he would forget the world but the garish day showed the tears in her pitiful clothes and the coarse skin callousing her pale feet.

"You must get me shoes," she said finally. "Lovely shoes. And a new sari with gold in the border like the townswomen wear, and a blouse with bright flowers on it. These are village clothes."

Then despair ate into him, and he lost the peace that he had found at her side

One day they came to the outskirts of a village where there was a country fair. Ram Pyari, with the instinct of gaiety overcoming for a minute her worries, took the silver bordered veil from her bundle

"I will go to the *mela* with you," she said, "and you will get me shoes." Ram Singh looked at the ground and then took up the waterpot with a great weariness in his limbs

"As God wills, so shall it be," he said, and she followed him, radiant with the scarlet marriage-mark on her forehead, her short slender body weaving its way sinuously under the bright and heavy clothes

He walked with his head high, and held out his hands, ashamed after all to demand money. "Give alms to a holy man. May you wash the face of seven sons, sister. Mother, may your sons live long." The women tittered and turned away. "What kind of a holy man is this?" they laughed and nudged each other. "He seems to follow some earthly goddess."

So it happened that when the evening came Ram Singh had only collected a meagre handful of copper coins, and there was not enough for Ram Pyari's shoes. He was counting his money for the second time, morose, when a man stopped in front of him. He was conscious first of his feet, encased in huge, shining-brown, English-style shoes, grotesque under a new calico pyjama. Ram Singh looked up. The man was tall, with a fierce beard and a rose-coloured turban. His shirt was striped in many colours and a cheap watch dangled ostentatiously from his breast pocket. He was a villager, but there was an indefinable air of new wealth and the town about him.

Ram Pyari was studying the man and his new clothes as if hypnotized. And then he noticed the man's eyes. They were fixed on her, sucked into hers, as his, Ram Singh's, had been on that fateful day when he saw her first.

The man sensed that he was being watched. He

dropped to the ground and squatted, looked at his shoes, and pulled his shirt neck to order

"She is a good woman I have come to the fair to find just such an one "

He took out of his girdle a fat bag and began taking out a thick bundle of notes and some silver rupees "See, two hundred rupees I will give for her What can she do with a vagabond like you? I will give her clothes and bangles and shoes "

Ram Pyari was looking at him with longing and the tears were streaming from her eyes He was talking to her "Shoes with silver and sequins on them, that any woman's heart might like "

"I only want a home " she said, as though his question had been asked, "and to have shoes and clothes, and to be a good man's wife "

Ram Singh shuddered and turned his eyes to the villager His bold eyes under the rose-coloured turban were eating up the grace of Ram Pyari, and she was uneasy under his glance, more weak and more beautiful than ever

The man took out the cheap watch with an air of finality He got up as if he knew the deal was over

Ram Pyari was still crying and took hold of Ram Singh's arm "I want to be a wife " she said, as if trying to excuse herself "I only want to be a wife in some good man's home " She pulled the silver border low over her face, so that he could not see her eyes, and followed the tall rangy figure of the man as he turned and started walking away

\* \* \* \*

The bag of money fell with a dull thud into the dust at Ram Singh's feet He could still hear the tinkle of Ram Pyari's cheap metal bangles, he could still, through the crowd see her legs and body moving to some divine and inner rhythm

Money He had not thought of it What was money to him? He was a wanderer by paths and streams

Then he heard a voice It was his guru calling insistently "Life is a fair, my son, and the fair

ground is life Fetch me some water to drink once more By serving the guru your soul shall find freedom from the witcheries of the world "

He woke up from his day-dream with a start, put the bag of money into his waterpot, and started walking quickly, as though by some compulsion, east again, to the east He was walking as he had walked when he left home as a boy, leaving his responsibilities behind him. He was going again to his guru, again he would tread on the road to salvation

At the holy feet of his master he would lay the dreadful, sinful burden of that money, and ask forgiveness "Save me, your chela, save me from the witcheries of the world "

*Graham Cherry*

## *HOLI FESTIVAL*

TONIGHT IS HOLI, hectic drums  
 Throb out for Hindu holiday  
 I listen, but from far away  
 The deeper, steadier throbbing comes  
 From villages and valleys where  
 I wandered, in the time called Peace—  
 Music of market, circus, fair,  
 Murmur of pleasant concourses  
 Of young folk, in old shires  
 So England speaks to English bone  
 More vividly, more eagerly than  
 Local din but creed and race  
 Are accidents, and man is man  
 —And these are happy O time and space  
 And history, these three alone  
 Split men apart, and hold them there  
 Ask them why, on my inmost ear  
 Tonight, two voices beat, not one!





influence and enables his successors to find in his poetry the quality of a releasing force

This failure of the last romantic leads him to aspire to classicism, this nostalgia tries to canonize itself into religious faith, this lack of political vision calls itself royalist. All this is significant because Eliot is something more than a mere self-conscious poet, though that is a great deal, he is the great poet of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is the subject matter of his poetry. What he has done in poetry has been accomplished so far in easier prose only by a very few of the great writers of to-day, Proust, Joyce, Kafka, and to a certain extent, Virginia Woolf. This is unique achievement and without this voyage into self-consciousness, the conflict or the failure would have been of little interest. As a matter of fact, this self-consciousness is the prerequisite in the consideration of adjustment or resolution.

The explanation of the failure lies largely beyond Eliot's control. Self-consciousness in a disrupted society, without any organic sense or consciousness of community, is bound to be torn in self-division, to be contradictory. I need not go into the causes or the history of this self-division here, I only try to consider some aspects of Eliot's later poetry, the centre of which is the romantic problem of the continuity and unity of consciousness and its relation to action. But one can see in Eliot's self-conscious efforts to regain balance the proof of my contention. He realized long ago, in 1917, the nature of self-consciousness—personality as he calls it, and of objectivity—the release of personality, and wrote his historic essay, *Tradition and Individual Talent*. He acquired in his verse the tradition of West-European culture and then unfortunately came the last war and the last peace. In the wasteland of hopelessness, Eliot tried to strike his roots deeper in the objectivity which his sense of tradition could provide, and it was understandable that poetical catholicism should have been the subsequent development. In as much as it helped him with the equipage of poetry, it

was not objective, nor was it classical, for such qualities demand a mythology which binds people in a pattern of community culture. Eliot knows that it is not possible to create a mythology of one's own, as the early Romantic poets in their search of human values had tried in vain to do. Unless you are ready to contemplate the prospects of a big change, you can at most be tempted by the artificial, forced and neurotic pattern of the temporary class unity Fascism offers. Eliot luckily did not, like Pound, accept that, but turned to the safer sanctities of the signs and wonders of the Catholic tradition. As Eliot wrote of the romantic Blake "Had these been controlled by a respect for impersonal vision for common sense, for the objectivity of science, it would have been better for him."

It is obvious that Eliot has this respect for impersonal vision, at least for purposes of poetry, but not for science whose values now appear to be human and allied to dialectical materialism. So he turns to the recipes of religion and tries to exploit the philosophy and mythology of a museum tradition which once had tremendous social validity. "The confusion of thought emotion and vision" is not limited to Eliot himself, as it was not in the case of Blake or Shelley, "but with the environment which failed to provide what such a poet needed!" although Eliot the poet "may have been quite unconscious of the motives."

Like most of us, he too has tried to picture the history of mankind and has been baffled by what is called the episode of capitalism "a complication in economics and machinery" only, as he terms it in his essay on Tradition. This complication, the most important in human history, results in the words of John Dewey (in *Art as Experience*) in "compartmentalisation of occupations and interests which brings about separation of that mode of activity commonly called 'practise' from insight of imagination from executive doing, of significant purpose from work, of emotion from thought and doing." "Those who write the anatomy of experience then suppose that these divisions inhere in the very

constitution of human nature " Writing on this split personality, S Gideon, the author of *Space, Time and Architecture*, who is not apparently a communist and was a successor to Eliot in the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, comments well "This is our inheritance from the nineteenth century during which the different departments of human activity steadily lost touch with one another The principles of laissez-faire and laissez-aller were extended to the life of the spirit "

Eliot's solution therefore is in the search for unrelated moments on the one hand and on the other in the theory of multiple personality, which is bound to bring in more bafflement and pain (that makes the verse all the more moving) and which escapes responsibility in this world of hollow men, stuffed men "The point of view," Eliot wrote long ago, "which I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul, for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a personality to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality " In case you doubt the wisdom of the statement, Eliot adds "But of course those who have personality" etc , even Eliot's humility is not endless We need not pause here on the question if the artist can express his medium or if he uses his medium which cooperates and resists Nor need we ask if unity is confused here with identity

Let us only remark how one finds this romantic quality—and I need not define romanticism to readers of Eliot the critic, even in Eliot's use of the language Following Johnson, Eliot rightly rebuked Milton for his artificial use of the language Eliot of course uses words and idioms according to the genius of the language But in a broader sense, in Vossler's sense, his use of language is artificial in that it fails, for whatever reasons, to have a wide communication value Just think of that fine passage of the ancestors dancing in *East Coker* without reference to the little known Somersetshire village from where the Eliots migrated in the 17th century Or take an example from the

middle poems Burbank with a Baedeker It is a short poem of a page and a half and you will be smothered by tradition The poem contains quotations from and references to Gautier's *Sur les Lagunes*, St Augustine James' *Aspern Papers*, Othello (three times), Browning's *Toccata of Galuppi* Ruskin, *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, Donne's letter to Sir Henry Wotton, *Antony and Cleopatra* (twice) Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, *Macbeth* *The Merchant of Venice* *Venice Preserved* *Romeo and Juliet* a number of Shakespeare sonnets and Spenser's *Ruins of Time*

In considering the whole of Eliot's poetry one finds, to quote him again, that "it represents and Pater represents more positively than Coleridge" (Eliot more than any other writer) 'of whom he wrote the words 'that inexhaustible discontent languor, and homesickness the chords of which ring all through our modern literature' ' Of course it was Pater the precursor of much of the symbolist movement who wrote about that burning with a gemlike brilliance in moments, "to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake" It is their momentariness which hurts and forms the subject matter of some of the great passages in *Burnt Norton* *East Coker* *The Dry Salvages* or *Little Gidding* The moments of happiness

Not the sense of well being fruition fulfilment security  
or affliction  
Or even a very good dinner but the sudden illumination—  
We had the experience but missed the meaning  
And approach to the meaning restores the experience  
In a different form beyond any meaning  
We can assign to happiness

Again

For most of us there is only the unattended  
Moment the moment in and out of time  
The distraction of it lost in a shaft of sunlight,  
The wild thyme unseen or the winter lightning  
Or the waterfall or music heard so deeply  
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music  
While the music lasts

Both these passages are from *The Dry Salvages*, which because of its closer organic unity is perhaps the best of the four late poems, but the same point could be illustrated from the other poems as well. But one feels like asking, if these moments of happiness—with the children in the foliage, laughing, sudden in a shaft of sunlight or lost, the sunlight on the dry pool, with the passage into the rose garden, quick, now, here, now, always,—moments which recur in images in all the late poems and in *Family Reunion*, if these moments are the spring of the still point of the turning world? This again is an image which one finds haunting Eliot's poetry since *Coriolan* and forms the nucleus of some of his most important verse. Perhaps the still point of the turning world, "there where the dance is," is not so much the dance as these pure moments, especially of childhood. Eliot too, like Wordsworth, sings of the purity of the child's mind,

Issues from the hand of God, the simple soul

(*Animula*)

If you are not inclined to try to control "the flat world of changing shapes and colours", as science does, you are left with the alternative of Pater's cult of the moment or Wordsworth's intimations of immortality in childhood, in the child's natural absence of self-consciousness. But the dance? Valéry with a somewhat similar preoccupation with the fatigue of life and the vitality of abstractions uses the dance in his *Eupalinos où l'Architecte précède de l'Âme et la Danse*, to a more reasonable conclusion. I cannot do justice to that long passage where the incurable L'Ennui de Vivre is redeemed by Athikte's dance and when Socrates cries out

O Flamme !

Cette fille est peut-être une sotte ?

O Flamme !

Et qui sait quelles superstitions et quelles sornettes forment son âme ordinaire ?

O Flamme, toutefois ! Chose vive et divine !

Mais qu'est-ce qu'une flamme, o mes amis, si ce n'est le moment même ?

But Eliot does not quite look at the dance as an object of abstraction beyond the ennui, nor at the dancer—*hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère* though the dance—ballet or ballroom—might have provided material to a great poet to write on his ideas of objectivity. The image is obvious and twofold. One sits with the audience or watches from the wings and apprehends the dance through the movements of the dancers. And one joins the dance: the dance is the centre, round which, to and from, the other dancers in relation enact the dance and then from the active realization of the dance one reaches the objective form of the dance, in time, in space, in the whole and details. One does not start with subjective notions, speculating on the details, on the dancers, but one may have the dance itself. That is the crude image and only Eliot could properly embody it in English verse.

And Eliot of the later poems comes very near the image. He is in search of objective point, the still point which is in movement not in isolation but in the centre. The objective vision presupposes existence within the active circle, different from any bird's-eye view from above or from any angular perspective from the fringe or from beyond the line. As the circle is the circle of life, there is nothing beyond it but death. And it is strange but understandable that death should encourage the lively pretence that through death you are an outsider. Thereby you impede the dance and disturb the still point, though of course you enrich your restless opposition to the still point of the turning world by exquisite abstractions, by anthropomorphic romancing about God or by invoking the dead legends of old Ireland or the visions of occultism.

Eliot does not believe in science and the possibilities of human control over nature, which is the purpose of science, if science is allowed to work free from interference by people who lose by more human and equitable control over nature, human and otherwise. What man has made of man! So he sings in *Burnt Norton*.



Or when under ether the mind is conscious but conscious  
of nothing,  
I said to my soul be still and wait without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing wait without  
love  
For love would be love of the wrong thing, there is yet  
faith  
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the  
waiting  
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought  
So the darkness shall be the light and the stillness the  
dancing  
Whisper of running streams and winter lightning  
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry  
The laughter in the garden echoed ecstasy  
Not lost but requiring pointing to the agony  
Of death and birth

(East Coker)

I need not dwell here on the negative quality of Eliot's mysticism. Before we consider Eliot's use of the Gita, it is interesting to turn to *Family Reunion* where the sequence of the dramatic form helps us in understanding this negative stillness. Amy, dowager Lady Monchensey, opens the play, wailing on the past

O Sun that was once so warm  
O Light, that was taken for granted  
When I was young and strong and sun and light unsought  
for  
And the night unfear'd and the day expected  
And clocks could be trusted tomorrow assured  
And time would not stop in the dark

Ivy is raw and says

I would follow the sun not wait for the sun to come here  
One cannot sit still and follow the sun at the same time

As Charles puts in

Amy has been too long used to our ways  
Living with horses and dogs and guns  
Ever to want to leave England in the winter

Amy keeps Wishwood ready for Harry to return to his estate after eight years of world touring with a wife, and, as Agatha says, his homecoming must be painful



I mean painful, because everything is irrevocable,  
 Because the past is irremediable,  
 Because the future can only be built  
 Upon the *real* past Wandering in the tropics  
 Or against the painted scene of the Mediterranean,  
 Harry must often have remembered Wishwood ,  
 The nursery tea, the school holiday,  
 The daring feats on the old pony  
 And thought to creep back through the little door  
 He will find a new Wishwood Adaptation is hard

Amy reminds · nothing is changed.

Agatha explains .

Yes, I mean that at Wishwood he will find another Harry  
 The man who returns will have to meet the boy who left

Harry who had disposed of his silly wife into the  
 sea, comes back, alone, and is haunted by the Furies  
 of Greek legendary fame into the Burnt Norton-like  
 country house of Wishwood He finds his people—all  
 people to whom nothing has happened, at most a  
 continual impact of external events Whereas he

I am the old house  
 With the noxious smell, and the sorrow before morning,  
 In which all past is present, all degradation  
 Is unredeemable

Harry speaks about his sense of oppressive solitude  
 in a crowd and how his wife met her death and how he  
 suffers Agatha comforts him and adds .

There is more to understand, hold fast to that  
 As the way to freedom

Harry is convinced by her scientific attitude

I think I see what you mean,  
 Dimly—as you once explained the sobbing in the chimney  
 The evil in the dark closet

Talking with Mary about their childhood memories,  
 Harry realizes

The instinct to return to the point of departure  
 And start again as if nothing had happened,  
 Isn't that all folly?

It is interesting to note in this connection, how in  
 this drama Eliot touches most of his main ideas and  
 suggests a criticism As Mary says

You attach yourself to loathing  
 As others do to loving an infatuation  
 That's wrong a good that's misdirected

But Harry takes up Eliot's position of multiple personality as he faces the Furies

When I knew her I was not the same person I was not  
 any person

Nothing that I did has to do with me  
 Agatha cries in vain

That there is always more we cannot rest in being  
 The impatient spectators of malice or stupidity  
 We must try to penetrate the other private worlds  
 Of make-believe and fear To rest in our suffering  
 Is evasion of suffering We must learn to suffer more

Harry however succeeds in the end and objectifies the Furies and thereby acquires a sense of freedom

\ This time you are real this time you are *outside* me  
 And just endurable

It is not necessary to quote further the passages about childhood memories or the moments of acute experience. But it is worthwhile to consider Harry's explanation of his parents' unsatisfactory love. There was no ecstasy. Consequently the emphasis on the horror of love, dung and death. It is strange indeed that a comprehensive major poet like Eliot has never written about the ecstasy or the glory of love. The only two poems which show some toleration of the idea of love are *La Figlia che Piange* and the opening passage of *The Wasteland*. But they are more about the nostalgia of love than about the fulfilment. Is it because love is an achievement of action as well as a growing relationship? The Gita, which Eliot calls the second greatest philosophical poem and which he uses as the peg to hang some of his most magnificent verse on, says that a man who sits controlling his organs of action, but dwelling in the mind on the objects of sense, that bewildered man is called a hypocrite. Now we must remember that Eliot's verse is dramatic, objectified as far as it is possible for a troubled romantic to project his nostalgia outside, and we must remember that it is not the

hypocrisy but the bewilderment which makes the poetry Otherwise how can one explain his search for wisdom and the terrible insistence on death, not hunger which it is for man to control (as one realizes in Calcutta, September, 1943), not love which is a human experience and activity, but dung and death? It cannot be Eliot who grieves for those things which should not be grieved for, yet speaks words of wisdom The wise, like Eliot, grieve neither for the living nor for the dead, as the Gita says, for certain is death for the born and you should not grieve over the natural, the inevitable, unless you are a crazy romantic His concern is with the problem of consciousness, self-consciousness and action, not the fruit of action, but an adjustment of self-consciousness and action, the achievement of an organic significance in his motive Not inaction Man cannot win freedom from action by abstaining from activity, he cannot even for an instant remain really actionless, for helplessly, as Krishna said, is everyone driven to action by the qualities born of nature And surely Eliot in his wisdom does not want to unsettle the mind of ignorant people attached to action. Like the dance and the still point there is an essential contradiction here The sense of freedom is possible only when you admit necessity All actions in their entirety, O Partha, culminate in wisdom As the burning of fire reduces the wood to ashes, so does the fire of wisdom burn all actions to ashes (Shakespeare used this two-pointed illustration for another purpose and accepted old age)

But suppose you are all too human and the scattered moments of happiness haunt your memory? After all it is only human to dwell on the objects of sense and get attached to them Desire is followed by anger, as Krishna said, desire which is bound to be baffled on occasions and lead to anger, unless you have a scientific mind and try to relate things, desire, anger, delusion lead to confused memory As any student of psychology will say, one hoards one's treasures of childhood and if one is a great poet the treasures will enrich

themselves into symbols. The more acute the confusion, the unhappiness, the more one feels unable to endure here on earth, to endure forces born from desire and passion but unrelated, without social sanctions, shrieks of discord of lonely self consciousness. But memory dies hard even in old age (Landor's "memory, the mother of the muses, is gone, they remain" is a happy state compared to Eliot's). But how can one renounce the voice and the choice, renounce actions, unless one harmonizes that discord and renounces imagination—abstract imagination, synonymous with confused memory confused because it is unrelated, disrupted, non social, in short, romantic. Surely Eliot wants to dramatize all this in the later poems. His *persona* is deliberate, an ordinary person like you and me, deluded by the pairs of opposites. So he says that the way out is the way of vacuity, of a kind of Mallarméan nothingness, which makes the despair more poignant.

Surely he knows very well that this is not the religious attitude of reception. 'The foolish disregard me when clad in humanity, the great lord of all being, empty of hope, empty of deeds empty of wisdom unreasoning, partaking of the deceitful brutal, demoniacal nature.' No, this is no description of incipient Fascism, but that is what Krishna said in warning. 'He who bears no ill will to any being, friendly and compassionate, balanced in pleasure and pain and forgiving he from whom the world does not shrink away, who does not shrink away from the world, he is dear to me.' But that is the problem Eliot throws up—the lack of balance and all that it entails. Anti-scientific he has no dialectics to comprehend life in movement. As Joseph Needham has pointed out, Sir Thomas Browne was faced with this problem long ago and like Bacon, like Montaigne, like Milton but unlike Donne, Browne faced the problem, of course in his own way. He was a scientist and religious at the same time and his reconciliation is already present in the faith and unless one is helped by the social validity of the

religious belief, even this ambiguous resolution is untenable. That is Eliot's trouble, he is baffled by the unrelated variety of things, which his negative faith is incapable of organizing. So he writes such agonized poetry of consciousness looking on itself. His Krishna would have said that the knowledge which regards the several manifold existence in all beings as separate, that knowledge is passional. Further, natural actions though defective, and necessarily so, ought not to be abandoned.

Well, that is what Krishna said. My point is not that Eliot misuses the Gita. As Eliot said of the Elizabethan misunderstanding of Machiavelli and Seneca, it is enough to appreciate the magnificent use he makes of the Gita in *The Dry Salvages* which I hold is better made than in *Little Gidding* in spite of the latter's Dantesque gravity. And in a way *The Dry Salvages* shows a more vital hope than *Little Gidding* which again tries to take shelter in the Royalist Chapel. It is better for me to end with

We content at the last  
If our temporal reversion nourish  
(Not too far from the yew tree)  
The life of significant soil

It is a long way in development from the self-conscious passivity of *Prufrock* and the *Portrait of a Lady* where, as Wilfred Owen would have cried, nothing happens.

*THE BUDDING LAWYER*

**H**E WAS a clever fellow, this Minoo, and terribly lazy, so lazy, that if he could he would have asked someone else to scratch his back for him. All his examinations he had passed by wise calculation. He knew that examiners hated anything novel and that a professor never asked anything that his predecessor had not asked before. These gentlemen adored grooves. So all he had to do was to get up the examination papers of the past ten or twenty years. This had worked splendidly. Minoo had always secured a second class, without so much as buying his text books.

But now he had to appear for his first LL B. Here if anywhere the old method should do wonderfully well. Really, he detested examinations.

He was wise in the ways of the world, was this Minoo. He knew that a Government job was the open sesame to all kinds of treasures. To begin with, he could command a fat dowry. Then he could fill his pockets—somehow, some way, some time. Finally, who could be better respected? Unfortunately, all his efforts to secure a place were of no avail. The fact was, he had no influence of any kind with the authorities. Cursed luck! Why was he born into a family that was not in favour with the Government?

"It is due to your bad Karma," his grandmother had said. She ascribed everything to Karma.

Minoo loathed the word Karma. "I make my own Karma," he had retorted, and then, recalling a wise saying of General Smuts', had added "I am an offspring of the stars."

"A what?"

"An offspring of the stars, Grannie."

"Don't be ridiculous, Minoo Where did you pick up that rubbish?"

"Those are the words of what the English call an 'outsized' man, Grannie "

"The words of a very conceited man, you mean. But who is he, this Smutty?"

"The Vizier of the country of the Negroes A big man Very big, Grannie "

"Does he believe in God? Does he think of his soul?"

"I can't say, Grannie."

"Then you don't know the most important things about him, yet you call him a big man! I am surprised at you, Minoo But tell me, has he bettered the lot of the poor in his country?"

"Most of the poor in his country are the Negroes, and he hates the very sight of them "

"Hates his own people! Why?"

"Because they are black "

"And what's the colour of his own skin?"

"Whitish, I suppose "

"Then he is not a Negro?"

"Oh no, Grannie He would feel highly insulted to be called a Negro He thinks that he is an absolute *pukka bunna sahib* Of course he makes a mistake there, because the English give that title only to themselves The other whites are merely *sahibs* of a sort, according to them But they let Smuts flatter himself And he, poor man, thinks he is the only true *sahib* in the world "

"I don't understand these silly distinctions But if this Smutty is a *sahib* of a sort, what is he doing in the country of the Negroes? And how has he managed to be their Vizier? Have they no proper men of their own?"

"The English and the Dutch have occupied the country of the Negroes and ruled over them, with General Smuts at their head "

"So that's the kind of man he is, is he? A real robber?"

"You musn't talk like that, Grannie It's not

robbery to steal another people's country It is called Imperialism, and that's a fine thing, of course It's high time we Indians started an Imperialism of our own We might easily conquer South Africa "

"So you want us to be robbers like this Smutty?"

"Why do you confuse things, Grannie? Occupying somebody's country is not robbery It is, as I told you, Imperialism, and that's perfectly all right The whites will tell you that In fact, if we Indians took possession of South Africa, General Smuts would be the first to appreciate the necessity of the step The strong shall inherit the earth That's his own philosophy Of course we shall have to invent a moral story But that's easily done We can say that we are trustees for the South Africans, and are obliged to hold their country until they acquire a soul That might give us a dozen or so centuries It is difficult for the South Africans, especially the people of Dutch origin, to acquire a soul So we can rule them for quite a long while After all, we too are the offspring of the stars, so everything is permitted us "

"I don't like it at all Both you and your Smutty seem to me the offspring of mud, or you wouldn't justify such villainies "

"Offspring of mud! So that's what I am? Tell that to Mother "

"I don't want a quarrel on my hands No, thank you But I am glad that you are not a Gandhi "

"Gandhi is too good for this naughty world He ought to have been born a woman "

"And what's wrong with woman? Were it not for a woman, you would not be here "

"Perhaps perhaps But a woman has no guts, she is always wailing and bewailing We believe in standing up and in fighting for our rights "

"If you had met Gandhi, as I have, you wouldn't talk such clotted nonsense Before him you feel petty and vulgar, however important you may think you are His look reduces you to your right size You and your Smutty are not fit to wash his feet "



Here a raucous female voice called . "Minoo ! Minoo ! Don't you waste your time in gabbling Go and study, or you'll fail in the examination "

Minoo returned to his room, most unwillingly It was so much nicer to unbosom himself than to mug up law He loathed the task But there was no escaping it His father demanded it He had to ache over his books That is, he read them as much as he could stand.

A month later Morning Minoo approached his grandmother, and touched her shrivelled-up feet

"Going to an examination or what?" she asked, with ominous anticipation

"Yes, Grannie "

She stroked his head and patted his back, mumbling some ancient mystic formula

Now Minoo went up to his mother, who was waiting to bless him "May you blacken the face of all your enemies," she concluded

Minoo, an offspring of the stars, did not believe in this kind of thing, but he put up with it all the same. To get along in an Indian home, one had to placate the womenfolk No peace without that Then there might be something in the idea that the gods shaped our ends Who could tell? Anyway, all aid was welcome, wherever it came from Without knowing it, Minoo had the soul of an Englishman

He had a last look at his notes, tightened his belt, set his tie at the proper angle and went out, silent, taut, determined

He returned home around six in the evening He immediately went into his own room, and lay down on his bed There was a nasty sensation in his mouth and his headache was simply unbearable

Someone came in He did not even look up But he knew by the peculiar shuffle that it was his mother. He waited for the inevitable question At last it came. "How did you get on?" The words fell upon him like a cold douche

What was he to say? He raised himself on his

elbow with a groan and muttered "I have a rotten headache, Mother Give me something for it, please "

"Pretending again?" she rasped

"No no, give me a pill "

She watched him swallow the aspirin, and then fired "Well, how did you fare?"

"I missed three questions, Mother Could only answer two "

"So you are going to fail! I knew that already," she wailed "Ram! Ram! What a son! what a dullard! How could you have been so foolish as to forget to answer three whole questions? You know perfectly well that I had to save rupee by rupee to pay your examination fees, and now, O Krishna, he has gone and thrown away my money into the dust Call that a son? But why didn't you answer all the questions?"

"Constitutional Law, Mother I well I see no sense in making us do English Constitutional Law It is of no earthly use to us And then the very questions I had left out as too stupid were asked! I think the examiner who framed them, had his vile eye on myself—the scoundrel! "

"What are you abusing the examiner for? It is all your own fault Instead of gadding about with the girls and wasting your time in jabbering with your grandmother, you might have been studying A fine way to justify your laziness! Lazy, that's what you are—an exact copy of your father "

"Now what's wrong with me?" cried the father, stepping into the room and surveying the scene loftily "Always speaking ill of me behind my back! A fine wife you are, to be sure! What have I done this time?"

"Look at the lout!" she cried, pointing to her son "He's going to fail in the examination All our money is being wasted I'm an unhappy woman Why did I get linked to you all? You earn little or nothing and your son simply will not study Follows your example, of course "

"Is this the way to speak to me?" roared the husband "One word more, and I'll teach you the lesson of your life After all, it is my money that is being wasted, not yours "

"Money! Money! What money do you earn? Call that an income! My father's clerk used to earn twice as much."

"Stop your tongue from wagging too much Father, father, you keep on saying, as though he were the Nizam Sahib A perfect Scotchman he was, counted his pennies so many times that he could never remember how many he possessed Thank God, I am not like him!"

"Don't you say a word against my father You are not fit to mention your name in the same breath with him "

"So you think that much about your father, and that little about me? Well, I have had enough of you and your silly airs " With that, he left the room, banging the door behind him

"Don't cry, Mother," said Minoo, putting his arm round her affectionately "Father is always hasty He pokes his nose into things that do not concern him A perfect nuisance he is But don't you worry I am there to look after you My money is yours "

She looked at him through the mist of her tears

"Yes, yes," he went on, "you have full permission to marry me to whatever girl you like All the dowry will be yours Everything, everything "

"My boy, my darling boy," she sobbed and laughed at the same time, burying her head in the curve of his arm

And so the two talked, discussed, planned Minoo was very sweet to his mother He agreed to everything she said or proposed

Only, later on, when his headache had disappeared, he decided to go to the cinema His mother smilingly put the money into his hand

Minoo laughed quietly to himself He might fail in the examination, but he was certainly a budding lawyer

*TWO POEMS*

*KANKAVATI*

**T**HE SOUND of your name is the music to which  
my life is wedded,  
O Kanka O Kankavati  
My heart beats to its rhythm, and to its rhythm my  
blood sways in incessant waves,  
O Kanka O Kankavati  
Tell me, what is the message of the numberless stars,  
storming the infinite spaces with light?  
What does the night wind say sighing among the  
leaves?  
What is the word of the water, flowing foamily through  
continents?  
I think it is your name that the stars and the seas and  
the winds proclaim,  
O Kanka, O Kankavati

If it was not so, would not the stars have gone out  
ages ago leaving the spaces of the sky blind  
and desolate?  
Would not the waters have been silenced, and the  
eternal winds hushed for ever?  
For your name is the last starry word that blossoms  
after all the words have been spoken,  
O Kanka O Kankavati!  
And words would have merely been words and no  
word would ever have become a song  
If it was not your name that the stars and the seas and  
the winds proclaimed,  
O Kanka, O Kankavati!

## THE ILISH

A SHARH has come to the skies    Bengal is  
     rain-benumbed  
 By the shores of the cloud-coloured Meghna the  
     slender *supari*-trees are hazy.  
 On the banks of the Padma, a century-old place is  
     standing, still as a painted scene, awaiting  
     oblivion

Murky is midnight, and the river is dark and crooked  
 Ah the little boats ! Swift as arrows, they cross the  
     torrent  
 Who are those, half-naked, dripping in rain, flinging  
     nets and pulling ropes with all their might ?  
 They are those who feed us, themselves starving

At the end of the night the black blind wagons at  
     Goalundo  
 Are filled with the bright harvest of the water—dead  
     *ilish* by the hundred  
 It is the wantonest joy of the river, killed, cold and  
     lovely—  
 Hills of silver gleaming in the night

At last in Calcutta's colourless morning, each house  
     gives out the rich smell of *ilish*, hissing on the  
     oven,  
 And the city-clerk's wife, her eyes mustard-smitten,  
     goes busily about, for the rains have come, and  
     the *ilish* has brought in the festive season

*Asharh* corresponds to June-July, the monsoon time  
*Ilsh*, a variety of sweet-water fish, in English called *hulsa*,  
     found in great quantities in the rivers of Bengal  
*Supari* is a variety of palm

## GRANDPARENTS\*

YE IS a small Tenasserim town of great delight to Lower Burmans. Though the houses are congested, bazaars and cinemas unknown, and robberies frequent and armed, the place contains things very dear to all Burmese hearts. Good food to eat and water to play with are found in abundance, amidst surroundings which form a perfect background for an indolent holiday. The Ye creek, muddy and about fifty yards wide at Ye, can be ascended to *chaung bya* (stream's source), where are gardens with bamboo huts and rich fruits on the trees surrounding, and clear swift water for bathes, or descended to *pinle sa* (ocean's opening) where oysters and fat seafish are found and where there is a beach with a pagoda on the first stretch of firm high ground and shells along the fore shore. Now a train goes right up to Ye once a day from Moulmein, and a motor boat can take you in two hours to the gardens or the sea. My visiting cousins and sisters read Deedok Magazines and English detective stories brought in their luggage from Rangoon, as they lie on the bamboo platforms above the water, but my grandmother and great aunts, who sit by talking, see the children only as reproductions of my father and his brothers and sisters who were brought up here during the end of the last century, without sight or sound of any world beyond the two sides of the stream, the gardens and the sea.

Our stock is Mon, a race which came into Burma from Eastern Tibet before the fifth century, by which time they had spread over the Tenasserim coast, founding a kingdom at Thaton. They are known as Talangs, perhaps because Indians from a place called

\* From *Burmese Family* which we are shortly publishing

Telingana on the Madras coast came across with elements of learning and religion, and infused their Dravidian blood into our ancestors, so that even today Talaings are darker skinned than their neighbour Shans and Karens

My grandmother and grandfather spoke Talaing, a dialect distinct from Burmese, and had never been to any other part of Burma, but Ye at the time my father was born (1880) had already been under British administration for fifty-four years, and was not very different from any other village of Lower Burma. There were vague and grand stories of the metropolis of Moulmein and of the growing far-off one of Rangoon, and of the exciting new fashions and wealth that accompanied a knowledge of English and a job under the government in the towns, but even my grandmother who, with her plot of paddy land and her fruit and vegetable gardens, was among the wealthiest in the village, never connected these with her children or those of her friends.

Grandfather died when quite young, leaving my *Pwa-Pwa* (Grandmother) with four sons and two daughters, of whom my father was the eldest. Like all the boys of the village, my father, after eight or nine years of unrestrained childish delights when he could play all day, in the stream and up and down the village streets, stopping only when hungry or tired, wheedling the grown-ups to let him sit up till late at night listening to stories, was sent to the monastery on the outskirts of the village. The word for monastery in Burmese, *kyaung*, is the same as the word used for school, and it was to be taught learning, and holiness, obedience and discipline, dexterity in manual and domestic tasks, and to be given a deep spiritual influence to last throughout life, that Grandmother and her friends sent their sons there. The parents whose hearts suffered too much at the thought of inflicting any punishment themselves, now handed them over to the monks with the plea that they would teach them to be good and obedient and chastise them severely if they did not obey.

The *kyaung* at Ye, like all *kyaungs* in Burma, was built in surroundings chosen for their pleasantness. On a slight slope overlooking the stream was a pagoda, the pagoda of the village where the people came on fasting and feast days to kneel on the paved platform around the tapering golden spire and recite the precepts. Down from the platform the steps were lined with shady trees, and to one side of this was the monastery, a wooden building with verandahs and tiered roofs, set in a large garden, containing a few flower beds for offerings at the altars, but chiefly wide shady spaces, great trees including a *nyaung bin* (a sacred banyan, with huge spreading branches), flowering *gangaw* trees and deep green mango trees. In one corner was a well.

The monks consisted of the *saya-daw*, the senior monk who acted as head and abbot, about twenty monks who had been formally admitted to the order and called *upasins*, and a number of novices who were wearing the yellow robe either for a short time, or to be admitted as monks later on. My father and his companions were admitted as *kyaungthas* scholars. The monks spent their days in the recitation of religious formulae and teachings, in meditation, in the telling of beads and the teaching of scholars. They did this while observing a strict and simple life, abstaining from solid food after noon, possessing no goods except the essential articles laid down in the monastic rules, observing chastity and poverty. To the people of the village they were the embodiment of goodness and holiness, living the noblest and most meritorious life a man can live. The people addressed them as "your holiness" in conversation, and themselves as "your holiness' pupil". The monks addressed the people as *daga*, giver, for they lived by the gifts of the people who donated robes, household articles and other necessities to the monasteries, as good works which brought them merit.

When my grandparents took my father to the *kyaung* he was a frightened little boy dressed in a cotton skirt called a *longyi* and shirt without cuffs and



collar, his hair was grown long in the centre and tied in a knot, the sides being cut in a fringe about two inches long all round, and



the rest shaved clean, a way of growing hair common to both little boys and girls and enhancing their youthful appearance. He and all the other scholars performed the domestic tasks of the monastery, swept and rubbed the good hard wooden floors, the monastery grounds and pagoda steps, because in these precincts all comers went barefoot, they drew water for drinking, and for the bath of the older monks, they followed the monks on their

rounds, two of them bearing a pole on which was slung a covered tray, to take any food donated in excess of what would go into the monk's bowl, they waited on the monks at meals, they learned to read and write, and do simple sums, to recite precepts and religious passages which they shouted at the tops of their childish voices in imitation of the deep intoning voice of the teacher monk, phrase by phrase, in the evenings they went home to eat the meal which the monks abstained from, but came back at sunset to recite the lessons of the day and many past days all over again, to join in the assembled night prayers, to sleep in the monastery and rise again before dawn.

When my father spoke to us of his years in the monastery he always chuckled with delight, in spite of this long list of disciplined tasks. He had the advantage from the first, he was stronger and taller than other boys, and in a system where all learning was by heart he had brilliant memorizing powers. The school-room of the *kyaung* had not the formal atmosphere of

the Western school room with each child at a desk and chair, and a silence except for the voice of teacher or child. The monastery boys all went into the same big room of the monastery, irrespective of age or stage, each with his slate or book, got down on the floor next to their friends, crouched over their work and started to shout out whatever passage was being committed to memory. My father's chuckling was at being able to remember how his voice was lustier than his rival's as he rested on his elbows and knees, and rocked backwards and forwards in rhythm to his chanting, with his legs going as high as he dared, giving surreptitious kicks and nudges to upset the balance of his similarly rocking rival, shouting out the passages all wrong when the supervising monk was at the other end of the room and could not distinguish his voice in the general din, so as to cause his rival to laugh and be reprimanded.

But these shortcomings of the schoolroom were punished with only a comical severity. During the play hour the lazy boys were made to cross their hands across their breasts and pull at each ear with the fingers of the opposite hand, in this position they were made to sit and stand, sit and stand, while one of the good boys usually joined by a crowd of others, sang in rhythmic chorus "*Hta Htaing Hta Htaing* Rise sit, rise sit." Or if the supervising monk was in a playful mood he made these bad boys each take a good boy on his back and race them up and down the garden. Shortcomings of a moral nature were not regarded as such a joke, however, disobedience and dishonesty were punished with severe beatings, in accordance with the injunction given to the monks by the fond parents when they handed their children over. "*So yin na na yaik pa* If he is naughty please beat him hard."

My father spent about five years like this. The hair of his top-knot grew longer year by year and it was nearing the time when he should cut it off, offer it to his mother as a tress for her hair-dressing, and have his head shaved and be initiated into the monkhood amidst

feasting and rejoicing This initiation, which every Buddhist boy went through in order to attain his true manhood by wearing the yellow robe, would last only a week or a month, or as long as my father felt the urge to remain in the monastery, for ever if he liked, in which case he would be formally received as an *upasim*. It was expected, however, that he would leave after a few months and help Grandmother and my aunts with looking after the paddy and the gardens. A train of accidents upset all these schemes.

When my father was about fourteen he was already among the oldest boys in the *kyaung*; his learning was



high and his conduct exemplary. The monks gave him the task of guarding the meat-safe where all the stores of sweetmeats given to the monastery were kept, as well as delicious titbits like the roe of *ngathalauk* fish, and the rich red oil of the heads of lobsters, which were kept over for the meals of the monks on following days. These wire-netted cupboards are called "cat-houses" in Burmese, because they are meant to guard the food from depredations of cats, and they serve the purpose

very well, but they could never guard against the appetites of little boys, for my father, even as I knew him in later years, loved people to eat good things and would always soften and allow his companions to have a bit just here and there. He was often scolded for it, but was so well behaved otherwise that the post was not taken from him. Just at this time, however, a supervising monk with very decided ideas of discipline was given charge of the boys, all the faults of disobedience, telling of falsehood, running off to the village at forbidden hours and such like were stored up till the end of the month. Then, on punishment day, the monk would gather a pile of sticks beside him and all the boys with faults in a row before him, and go through beating them one stick to one boy until it broke. One month my father was included in this row because the inroads on the meat safe stores had increased in spite of constant warnings. Being a big boy he was left to the end of the row, and could watch the zealous monk methodically working through the boys and the sticks. What we know of my father and physical pain is that my mother was once scolded very severely the only time in her life that she beat any of us, and that he himself, when about to take nasty medicine or a vaccination, would go through a series of shiverings and comical protests some of which I am sure were quite genuine. My poor father then watched the pile of sticks diminishing, and when there were but three sticks left and three boys between him and the untiring monk he suddenly took to his heels and fled right out of the monastery grounds, down the pagoda hill and down to the creek. He did not dare to go home because grandmother would have sent him back for a double beating, so he hitched up his *longyi*, tied his shirt round his head and swam across the stream.

One of the huts on the other bank belonged to a woman who had always been very fond of him because she believed him to be a reincarnation of her brother who had died in childhood. Burmese Buddhists believe that one goes through many existences on this earth,

and sometimes children are born who have not yet forgotten their previous existence by the time they can talk, they adopt habits uncannily like those of the departed member who, the fond and grieving relatives hope, has returned to them in the guise of this new child, they say "my bed", "my clothes" to the possessions of the dead person, especially if eggs are not included in their diet, the belief being that eggs cause them to forget. When we were very young, the fame of a wonder child, who could recite the most learned religious passages untaught, spread throughout Burma, and my parents travelled to hear him, he had been a monk in his past existence and could remember

My father's case was no outstanding one like this; he had just resembled the lady's brother in looks and gesture, and a few childish utterances helped out by her belief had endeared my father to her as having been *winsa* (come in and inhabited) by her brother. The good and fond lady received the boy with open arms, agreed that he was getting too old for the monastery, and promised to go over and plead with my grandmother to take him out now and hasten his initiation ceremony into the priesthood. This was achieved and my father went back to his mother's house and prepared for the *shinbyu* as the ceremony was called.

The manner of his exit from the monastery, however, had made him restless. During the short period he was free, he could go where he willed, and in this way he often met traders who came and went between Ye and Tavoy, a seaport town about a hundred miles away, to which passenger and cargo ships from Moulmein made regular trips. One day he was at the house on the opposite bank when a boy he used to know as a toddler returned from Tavoy after a trip to Moulmein. This boy could speak a few words of English. Moreover, he wore his hair in a *boh-sa-dauk* (a Westerner's crop) and seemed to think my father a jungle boy. All the restlessness in my father flowed over then, because up to now he had always felt himself clever and ahead of

other boys. He worried Grandmother to let him go to Moulmein and learn English, and get a job with the government which would bring them hundreds of rupees each month. Other families who considered that Grandmother had clever sons agreed that this would be a good idea, though none of them had been to Moulmein and Father was still a boy, it would not be so daring an adventure as it sounded, because there were some among our relations in the village who had Anglo-Burman connections in Moulmein. These would put my father in school and look after him.

So after his *shinbyu* and his spell in the monastery, my father set off by bullock cart to Tavoy to catch a sailing boat of trader friends who, in their sailing ships called *kattu*, ventured as far as the Nicobar Islands and could sail to Moulmein in about seven days. His head was now cropped, and my grandmother had put a ruby ring on his finger, he was sixteen years old, which was a very late age to start English schooling and pass it in time to get a good civil service job, but everyone at home thought he would do it easily for he had been the brightest boy in the monastery school.

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Moulmein, Maul la Myaing to us is a fair and prosperous city. It is fair in its descent from the hills behind in three successive parallel main streets, to the wide Moulmein River where sea going ships can sail in, and an island rich in legend lies dark and green in the sunlit water. It had prospered since it was made the military headquarters of Tenasserim in the British annexation of 1826 until, in about 1900, it had over 50,000 inhabitants and a busy rice and teak export trade. Moulmein is fair also because the ridges behind are crowned with pagodas and the hills and rivers contain waterfalls and caves, but to me it is particularly fair, like a queen city that rides athwart her domain, because my father and my mother came from the two ends of the natural sphere of Moulmein's influence. Ye and Thaton, each from about

100 miles away, each sent by the family as an adventurous experiment, to meet and contract an understanding in Moulmein

My maternal great-grandfather was a Talaing general, and when I look around at my mother's family I cannot think anything else, for they are all most robust, alive and resurgent, whether I take the members who have chosen industry and renown, or those others who have concentrated on hard living and the enjoyment of the pleasures of life, they all seem so ebullient, so much Lower Burman and not of the court of Mandalay

My grandfather was a pleader by profession, but by reputation much more—he was a classical scholar, famed for his fiery temper, his forthrightness and for the stern discipline he imposed on all his children, grandchildren, dependents and anyone else who was given into his charge. He was also known for sudden progressive and even radical courses of action while expressing most reactionary views. My mother says he was a great man. My aunts loved to tell of his mental prowess, of how he never learnt English, never spoke it, but always as he did his pleading in court he could understand everything that was said around him in English, my mother told us of how beautiful he looked on a horse, and when he was playing *chinlon*, which is a light cane ball to be kept in the air by tossing with legs, shoulders or any part of one's body that agility can devise, his short strong body, bare except for the *longyi* tucked about his loins, with tattoo marks in a blue-ringed pattern from waist to knee, and his long thick hair in a knot on the crown of his head, all looked more fair, more manly than the cropped hair, the shoes and socks and collars of the present punier generation

Grandfather started his family in a village just outside Moulmein, but a fire burnt down the house when my mother was still very young, and he decided to bring his family to Thaton and set up a practice there. He chose a site outside the town proper. It was then

surrounded by muddy fields and, knowing Thaton at present with its 220 inches of rain a year, I can sympathize with my aunt Kyi Kyi Lon, who is said to have rolled herself on the ground with rage at beholding such a prospect

The house which Grandfather built still stands today. There are not many houses left in Burma which reflect so well the type of comfort which a well-to-do family provided for in those days, or which have been built with so much regard to the customs of daily life and occasional festivities and so little regard for appearance. Grandfather enclosed about three acres, big enough to have a road run through the garden for the general public to use at certain hours of the day. He sunk two wells, planted mango trees of the *dasu may* (forgotten trees) variety for which Moulmein is famous, so delicious that a woman forgot her tresses in the ecstasy of its taste. The house always struck me most as having no face, its shape followed the dispersal of its various functional units, and each unit was placed on different levels from the ground according to the nobility or ignobility of the function that was to be assigned to it.

One of the wells was opened to the public use of the village as a good deed. The steps up were to washing platforms where Grandfather and the men of the family took their baths and clothes were washed by the women of the house. From here three steps went up to a store room and a long gallery which was mostly window and balustrade on one side. Here the family ate its meals and my aunts sat smoking their cheroots in the evening breeze. Three steps continued the verandah still higher to where the washing-faces water pots and drinking water pots were kept, and where morning ablutions were performed on to the water loving *pein* (arum) bushes below. Right at the head of the verandah was a study room. From this high verandah two big steps went up into the main part of the house which was two-storied, and which contained the altar at the head, on the east side. This was the



body proper of the house, but a modern visitor would see no pleasant rooms here, for it was built for communal living and for grandeur of space on festival days. There was one room for Grandfather, and a movable screen formed a bedroom for my aunts, but the rest was a big noble open hall with round pillars of solid teak, twelve inches in diameter. Then from the back, other steps again led down to a part lower in function. A broad verandah contained at one end the birth chamber where the grandchildren were to be born, at the other the powdering or dressing room for my aunts. This verandah was definitely a female part of the house and nothing was under it except the stables. Under the main part of the house was a big hall where Grandfather received his clients and, later on, my uncles and mother held a school for the children from the neighbourhood. From the women's verandah a flight of steps led down to a big and airy kitchen with shady trees on one side and a vegetable garden on the other. Behind the kitchen were the latrines and a little bathroom for my aunts to bathe in private when they desired, with the water brought across from the other well.

The house throughout was of the finest teak. In the main part the floor boards were a foot wide and shining with the polishing of grandchildren's exercise. The windows had stout iron bars against the dacoits for which Thaton was famous even in my day, the doorways from the verandahs had big folding doors, of six leaves, each doorway about eight feet wide and ten feet high, in memory of a nobler, bigger generation of Burmans, with three stout beams barricading it into position. The staircase closed with a trap-door of solid teak.

This great household was run without any servants as we know them today. Grandfather brought up an Indian youth who was called Apana, in the way that a Welshman is thought of as Jones by English people, because my grandfather and some of my aunts refused to pronounce a true Indian name correctly. Apana

looked after the horse for the carriage and carried water from the well. As grandchildren were born, they were sent back to be disciplined and educated after spending the first few years with their own parents. No children would have dared to withhold their offspring from the benefits of Grandfather's influence, until my father dared. There were ten members in my mother's family but the first five uncles and aunts are only legendary figures to me, for my mother was among the youngest and married late by Burmese standards, and my elder first cousins were of the age of uncles and aunts to us. There were ten of these cousins, born of three different families, sent back to Grandfather by the time the house reached its fullest and most pleasantly regulated stage.

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In the early morning before dawn my aunts would get up and cook the rice, to offer it at the altar with sliced fruits, and say their prayers. They cooked the morning meal after this, with foods from the garden and from hawkers, women who came around with cane trays of fish, poultry and vegetables on their heads. The meal was cooked by the time the procession of monks came through the road running across the garden, the various dishes were put into little bowls placed either in the monk's bowl or on the tray carried by two scholars behind. One of my aunts then rolled a low round table out of the store room into the long verandah, laid a mat beside it and served Grandfather's meal. In the meantime, another aunt saw to the children's preparations for school. She sat in the open doorway leading to the washing platform with a comb and a bottle of coconut oil beside her, and the children came up to her one by one. Both girl and boy cousins had their hair done in the same way as my father's was when he went to the monastery. My aunt oiled each head, combed the long tresses out and knotted them, in front of the little girls' knots she stuck a small arched ivory comb and on festival days she arranged a circle of flowers in its place. Then the

cousins raced each other down the steps and splashed and bathed at the well, the older ones drawing water for the younger. Up from their baths they put on clean school clothes, and sat around the low table after Grandfather had finished his meal. All the dishes were laid out for the older children to serve themselves, but the younger ones had their plates heaped with

portions of everything. After eating, each child ran with his plate out to the washing platform and put it in a wooden tub ready for washing, washed his fingers and lips and came back to dry them on the common napkin. They were not encouraged to drink water during the meal, they went up to the high verandah after it, where the water pot was on a stand, with a ladle hanging from it—a smoothened coconut shell with a handle stuck through a hole in it. On the table beside it were the drinking mugs, of lacquer, smooth silver and carved silverwork.

With the children gone to school, my aunts did all the household tasks, changed the water and flowers on the altar, washed clothes, rolled cheroots, pickled and preserved fruits and vegetables in dozens of big jars.

When my cousins returned they were given an early dinner and sent down to play in the garden. My grandfather would go down and sit there and have one after another come to him to learn the scriptures. When it grew dark they came up and the elder ones read their lessons, the younger ones played at polishing the shining teak floor. At about seven-thirty they



were taken into the altar room to shout their prayers aloud

These accounts of the childhood of all my elder cousins sounded most stern and disciplined when told us in our own pampered childhood by my gentle mother, she was with them at that time, still unmarried, the youngest and fairest daughter and the apple of Grandfather's eye, to my cousins not a disciplining aunt but someone very near their own age, to her elder sisters a sweet young girl who was going to receive more book education than a domestic training like their's. When I see my grown up cousins, however, I cannot imagine any routine which their lively minds did not animate their characters all bear a consistent stamp of push and cheerfulness and, far from their regimented years robbing them of anything, they have gained a kind of education which is rare in these days. Would that my father had not held such decided views on his right to indulge his children as he wished and had sent us for chastisement and learning in our religious teaching.

My grandfather at this time must have known a deep felicity of spirit as he sat in his garden in the evenings. Seated on his broad and stout chair with a betel box and spittoon on one side of him, and his favourite and most learned grand child, my cousin Lu Pe now Superintendent of Archaeology, reading the scriptures to him, he could sit in the shadow of his solid teak house,



with a row of mango trees before him, the towns people using his well of clean good water and the road through his garden which was open at the hottest hours



Mrs Critchley was of small stature and her husband of average build. She was short sighted too, and believing in the Victorian aid to-cure bad eyes had had her ears drilled through the lobes from which dangled a pair of small, reputed to be gold, earrings. In spite of this she squinted badly, screwing up her eyes as she walked out in the street, and even in the house she had to take the alarm clock off the shelf to see the time of day. Although she occasionally wore eye glasses of a rimless kind when at work about her weaving, she used a sixpenny magnifying glass to look for slubs or broken shots and probably impaired her eyes more in doing so. At fifty she looked a little old wizened woman.

Their domestic life had moved along as comfortably as circumstances permitted. It was said by the neighbours that Tommy Critchley, the father, was as quiet as an old sheep and wouldn't hurt a thing. It is true that the parents' behaviour revealed no outward indication of any inward sorrow or frustration as they begot and reared their afflicted offspring and there was ever a strange resigned humility about their bearing which, on first observing, saddened and then brightened one like sunshine breaking through cloud on a grey October day.

Ecar, their first born, had grown up to manhood with chronic afflictions. He was subject to fits. He had a tremendous head, the largest head ever to have been seen in the neighbourhood. His little piggy eyes were set far back beneath a massive bulging forehead devoid of eye brows and his hair straggled thinly, streakily just to the edge of the bulge. His arms were twisted and an accident in falling with a bottle during one of his fits added further affliction to his left hand, the broken bottle severing the guiders at the wrist and robbing him of the use of his fingers. His legs were twisted and his knees rubbed at every step, wearing the trousers on the inside of the knees which invariably sported crude patches of coarser materials—or holes.

David and Richard were somewhat similarly afflicted

about their legs, but they had the use of their arms and David particularly was firmer in step and his arms were strong, set upon broad shoulders. In contrast to his two brothers he was a dark hairy creature with bushy eyebrows beetling over his inky eyes, alive with a light that was absent in Richard's and Ecar's but seeming to have inherited his mother's squint.

Richard still wore shorts and his twisted legs were always visible. He looked much tidier in dress because he had no trouser knees to wear out, though owing to his large head there was always something comic about him in the way his cap sort of hung on the crown of his head, leaving a forehead of alabaster protruding, bare and unadorned except for his thin straggly hair, that like Ecar's just fretted the edge of the bulge. He had weak bowels too, and on several occasions had been sent home from school in a distressing condition.

The impression one got on passing the Critchley household was of an open door that revealed a mass of dirty pots and dishes upon a crowded table, a pair of old pit moleskins hanging upon a staple in the wall aside the doorway, a piece of fallow earth intended by the architect for a small garden which seemed to be used by all the dogs in the neighbourhood to deposit excrement, two boxes set upon small heavy iron wheels with pieces of floor-boarding nailed to the sides for handshafts, and probably the residue of broken boxes chopped up for firewood. These box barrows and the residue of wood choppings were significant—they were the symbol of Ecar's business, especially the barrows in which he hawked his neat little bundles of firewood.

Mrs Critchley, on Ecar's behalf, had a standing order on compassionate grounds with a local C W S store for half a dozen large wood boxes. It was David and Richard who chopped the boxes into small chips and made up neat little bundles of firewood which Ecar sold at two for three halfpence.

David, as I said, had strong arms set upon broad shoulders and in spite of his afflicted legs his father had managed to persuade the manager of the coal mine at

which he worked to give his son, David, a job David, therefore, worked down the mine and usually arrived home about half past two each day, sometimes with his father, but most times he was to be seen trying to keep pace with a gang of pit lads, his bottle slung deep in his inside pocket and paddling away with his arms and legs in a queer and arresting propelling motion. The large head with the coal black face set upon a misshapen body that spread out at queer angles, was crowned by a huge pit cap that only just hung on to the back of his head giving David a tragi-comic appearance, pathetic to any passing observer.

On Fridays when he arrived home he would put the final touches to Ecar's barrows, oiling the wheels and packing the bundles of firewood neatly into the barrows. He would have the barrows ready for four o'clock, the time Richard came home from school. Ecar and Richard then set out together with a barrow each, Ecar contriving with his twisted arms to let the weight of the shaft rest in his left hand whilst he got the barrow in motion with his right hand with which he was able to grip the handshaft. When he got the barrow in motion it was little trouble to him to keep it going on level ground and he managed remarkably well.

Perhaps it was this impression of utter resignation that seemed to drape the Critchley household in poverty, though the father spent many a night at his Working Man's Club, and a Woodbine cigarette stuck in the corner of his mouth was as characteristic of him as a cigar of Winston Churchill or a pipe of Baldwin. Ecar and Richard had always money for the cinema, going regularly to each change of programme at the two local cinemas which put on two separate shows each week. The mother too was an ardent picture fan. Thus from day to day the life of the family moved along comfortably, dreary and unexciting except for David.

David was fascinated with his skill in carving. He spent his leisure time fashioning things from wood. He carved a pit bogie and a pit pony and set them together in harness. His carving was plain and simple at first,



but gradually more intricate things grew from his knife. Then he found he could produce more satisfying things by using a chisel and he went on to acquire a useful set of carving tools. His carvings became his treasures and he took special pride in a piece of work he had carved out of a solid block of wood. It was a scene of miners at work hewing coal. The whole was achieved by subtle suggestion and inference rather than by carving out clear-cut figures of men, yet the men were there, straining, hewing at the seam. He'd animated the wood with life and muscle and action, giving to his work a vitality born of himself. His joy was the joy of his art, of his creations and he loved every one of them, having given of his best.

One day, the dreary comfortable life of the rest of the family was upset by rumours of a robbery. Some boys had broken into a little wooden shop, emptying the till of petty cash and taking cigarettes and sweets. Richard's name was mentioned and his parents asked him if what they had heard was true. Richard denied the allegations, but later that day two policemen called on the Critchleys and asked to see Richard. David answered the door and told the policemen Richard was at school. The policemen said they'd wait as it was only a little short of half an hour to four o'clock, the time the school closed for the day. Mr Critchley came to the door and enquired of the policemen what it was all about. One of them said they just wanted to ask Richard a few questions and that there was nothing for him to worry about. Mr Critchley said, "Come in then, no good 'anging abaht the street."

When Richard came hobbling in, his face blanched at the sight of the uniforms. He hesitated and stopped in the doorway undecided what to do, whether to turn and run for it or sink through the floor. Both alternatives were equally ridiculous and impossible as he couldn't run (look at his legs) and he was no magician to make the floor open and swallow him. His father decided for him. "Come 'ere, Richard. What's tha' been up to na', eh?" Then turning to the policemen

he said, " 'E told us 'e's nothing to do wi' it—if it's that robbery yer've come abait "

"Well, that's what we want to know," assured one of the policemen. He seemed to be in charge of the inquiry and continued "All we want to know, Richard, he said, speaking very amiably and good naturedly for a policeman. Richard thought, "is where were you at ten o'clock Tuesday night—the night that Mrs Thornycraft's shop was broken into by some boys?"

"Ah went to the pictures," said Richard haltingly

"You went to the pictures, eh, Richard!" repeated the policeman. Richard nodded and mumbled, "Yes" He was feeling very guilty under the eye of this clean nice, uniformed man in blue that asked questions in such a nice soothing sympathetic voice—but the voice seemed ever so powerful, so overpowering in its soothing searching sympathetic tones

"You went to the pictures Tuesday night," the voice continued as he jotted down notes "You were nowhere near the shop then?"

"No, I wasn't," said Richard shaking his head and feeling very hot

"Who did you go to the pictures with?" continued the voice inexorable

"Miself—went on mi own" He spoke sharply, nervously. Why didn't the man speak harshly like his teachers? He would feel much better telling lies to him then. But no the voice was kindly, searching irresistible

"Where did you go Monday night, Richard?"

Richard brightened under this question. Monday had nothing at all to do with the little wooden shop. He could answer the men truthfully "The pictures" said Richard, with alacrity

"You went to the pictures Monday night, eh, as well! You're a proper picture fan, Richard. I suppose you went to the pictures on Wednesday night too eh? Did you Richard?"

"Yes," answered Richard

"Ah!" exclaimed the policeman and continued "You went to the pictures Monday night, Tuesday night and Wednesday night. Surely you don't go to see a picture twice—or do you, Richard, eh?" The voice seemed again to crowd in on him with its kindness and he didn't know what to say or do. Then the voice suddenly switched from query to statement. "Mrs Thornycraft says she saw you playing round her shop just before she locked up on Tuesday night. You were playing at guessings and pointing to boxes of sweets and advertisements. A boy called Harper Jackson was with you."

Richard looked from the policeman to his father, to David and Ecar. All eyes were on him. He began to blubber and fell down on the hearthrug, rubbing his eyes with his fists almost like a baby.

The policeman waited for the blubbering to subside. The father said, "It's no good tha' crying if tha's done it. Tha' might as well own up na'. Get up sither, get up!" His father got the strap and lifted Richard bodily to his feet by the scruff of his neck. He raised the strap.

"Stop that, Mr Critchley, we'll attend to Richard," said the policeman.

Mr Critchley lowered the strap. "Ah've a good mind to lay it abaht thy ribs," he said, "bringing disgrace upon us like this."

"Let him be, Mr Critchley," said the policeman.

Mr Critchley said, "What will his mother think, when she comes home?"

The policeman ignored this remark and turned his attention once again to Richard.

"Now Richard, just tell me what happened that night after Mrs Thornycraft locked up her shop." The voice was kindly and compelling. Richard felt he wanted to tell the truth, to make a clean breast of the whole thing and get it over. Anything was better than this—this eternal questioning—this lying.

"We got in by the little window at the back."

"What did you take?"

"Six and sixpence—it was in a drawer "

"And what else?"

"Some cigarettes and some chocolate "

"Who was with you—anybody?"

"Yes, Harper Jackson "

The evidence was collected and the policemen buttoned up Richard thought that the worst was over until the voice said, "Well Richard I think you'd better come along with us "

"No!" blubbered Richard, "Ah don't want to go Ah want to stay at home "

Richard's wailing was of no use, he had to go David who had been very quiet throughout, went up to Richard and said "Don't be a cry baby, Richard—yer'll come home again Ah'll help Ecar with the chip round Be a good lad, and they won't keep yer long Take this pony and bogie—yer've allus wanted it 'E can take it with him can't 'e, constable?" The policeman nodded Richard took the pony and bogie hugging it to his breast David picked up his cap which had been lying on the hearth and gave it to him The policemen were standing waiting They looked too big for the house They seemed to fill it Little Richard hobbled between them and out they went

Ecar broke the silence of the house Though well in his twenties his mind was as simple as a child's and he said "What will they do with 'im father?"

"Ah don't know " his father said then added, "they might send him to a Reformatory "

"What's that?" said Ecar

"Aw! Shut up, " said his father irritably

The news reached the ears of Mrs Critchley at work She left immediately and came home She hurried to the police station, but she could do nothing and after seeing Richard returned home The boys' court was held and Richard and his friend were found guilty and sent away to a Reformatory School for two years

David kept true to his promise Every Friday night and Saturday afternoon he went with Ecar on the round

jogging along in between the shafts of one of the barrows. He was a great help to Ecar and saved him much embarrassment and ragging from small boys playing around the streets.

David's life was full. He never seemed to tire and Ecar's firewood business seemed to increase under his guidance and help. His carving also developed. He never neglected his carving because it gave him deep fundamental joy. There was no joy to him like that of seeing his creations mature under his hand. His carvings were him—he, himself at his highest and best and all he wanted to be. He was reaching out, projecting himself far beyond the reaches of his ungainly body, living with things beautiful, aesthetic—his world.

Ecar's fits began to take a turn for the worse and he did silly things. He took things out of the house and sold them. One day he took one of David's carvings. It was a carving of Moses coming down the mountain, the moment when the music of the idolaters reaches his ears and the Tablets are raised above his head to smash them down. Ecar was hurrying along with the carving when a fit came over him and he fell violently on his head, cannoning against the edge of a doorstep. The fall was fatal. Ecar died without recovering consciousness. Many of the neighbouring folks said, "It's a good job he's gone sudden-like without lingering."

Richard was allowed leave from the Reformatory and Ecar was buried in the customary style, the Critchleys managing three coaches to follow the hearse and some black for each member of the family, out of the insurance.

With Ecar out of the way and Richard still undergoing reform, David started to organize himself. He built a hut on the Hollow Tops near by, where most of the local miners had built poultry pens and some had allotments. He took the barrows and left them by the hut. He turned over the soil in the little plot attached to their house and planted flowers. His work became infectious and his mother set to work inside the house.

Old curtains disappeared and fresh, clean ones took their place. The table shed its dirty pots and pans. The father appeared to straighten as he walked out, shedding completely the sheepy shoddy slouch that had always characterized him. He along with David acquired more land around the hut and cabbages, cauliflowers, beans, potatoes, radishes and other vegetables began to grow on the once fallow land.

David gave faithfully a few hours each day to his carving. The idea came to him to try and sell some of the smaller ones such as candle sticks, bowls and little caricatures of folks. He took a few of these carvings with him when he went round with the little bundles of firewood which he now chopped and assembled in the hut. Several of his customers bought out of pity for the family, but soon friends of these people were asking where they had purchased such exquisite pieces of carving.

David's fame spread around and after a few weeks of hawking his carvings, orders began to pour in. He worked hard and began to realize the potentialities of his work. By turning out small trinkets and things he could earn sufficient money to leave the coal mine and thus allow himself time to experiment in his art as well as satisfy the commercial demands of the people around.

He was feeling happier than he'd ever felt in his life and the home of the Critchleys reflected outwardly in flowers, cheerfulness and cleanliness, all David's inward feelings. He had taken the sack-cloth and ashes from their home and dressed it in fine and beautiful raiment.

Strange and untold things have happened in the past and whether it was the pony and bogie that David had given to Richard on his conviction that affected and inspired Richard to take up the work of his brother also, no one can tell. But Richard returned from the Reformatory a changed boy with carvings he himself had carved.

*LES ADIEUX*

**A**UTUMN always disfigured the front of the house. The plane trees were rust, tired and sick in the wind. From any window the garden looked wretched—piled leaves, brittle flower-beds and, so untidy, newspaper entangled in the railings. Such a messy time of the year. Julie hated autumn. She hated any goodbye.

The door closed. She sensed every movement of her mother's entrance, her soft tread, her bending to smell the yellow chrysanthemums, her sigh, charming and pretentious, vanity even in that.

"But Julie how nice. From Cary?"

Julie clutched the curtain. "Cary? Yes, this morning, I think."

She moved from the window and sat down slowly on the ottoman drawn close to the fire.

"Very sweet of Cary," said her mother.

"Oh I don't know. I suppose it is. But he's so vague about everything, frightful really at times. I shouldn't think it's altogether true to say he meant to send them. It's sweet of him, as you say. I suppose he is a darling. Did Millard call? No?"

She stopped, thinking how prettily the aspidistra behind her mother's head caught and held the jerky rhythm of the flames. No vanity there, no farewells. She looked down at her watch.

"It's four—the afternoon's gone now. You know it's nice of Millard to offer the money for the house, but he hasn't been by the place for weeks. Do you think I should phone—or would that be bad taste?"

Her mother was looking haughtily at the embroidered

linen in her lap 'Just invite him down, my dear He must do something then But why not see him when you're in town He wouldn't refuse you You know that Cary too would scarcely be a problem, your facility for avoiding him astonishes even me at times Millard, my dear, if you haven't noticed, *likes* you Why not make a day of it Phone, tell him you're shopping in town and would he mind No need to mention the house, of course "

"But he'd suspect, wouldn't he?"

"Naturally But suspect is the wrong word Julie, I don't think my calculations are wrong With every deference to Cary—a nice boy, charming—I must say it's quite plain Millard offers better prospects You should see that, my dear And frankly if he doesn't come to you, you must go to him "

Julie was silent The fire grew opaque glistened, swirled, threw out the lines of a hundred so distant shores, like the pebble in the pool or a meteor in a burning sea Was it ?

She jerked her head in annoyance "Must Robbie thump that piano all day?

She caught her breath

Her mother scarcely stirred

'He has an uncommon liking for Beethoven, my dear, if that's what you mean " The needle through the linen made her pause "Why not phone Millard now see him tomorrow and have him down for the week-end With you and the house settled, my conscience will be better disposed towards Robert's future Ring for Millie, my dear there's no coal in the scuttle " Julie rose without a word 'Robert must be made to see that music is not a profession It's an amusement Your uncle Charles can get him into Lewis' Selling ladies' hats is undignified, but it's fashionable And Robert has charm Any case Charles has hinted at a partnership if Robert shows promise My dear, bring the coffee table closer and put the flowers on the bureau Millie might as well bring tea in here And perhaps it would be as well



to stop Robert repeating that piece for the hundredth time "No, let Millie tell him "

Julie set the coffee-table down and moved towards the window

"Sit here, my dear, and let's be quite clear about Millard "

Julie turned back to the fire, dreamily, and with the quick snatch of autumn through the window still before her eyes.

Millard came In the avenue the leaves blew, matting themselves through the dry privets and heaping the rubbish of summer in the garden Julie felt the week-end had been a success Autumn could be looked down upon, just the passing to spring And the window was no longer cold, it radiated warmth Millard was near, hat in the hall, toothbrush in the bathroom. She was beginning to know she wanted to love him Tonight when the curtains were across the window and something was sparkling on her throat and her mother was gilt in the chair and Millard was talking and she on the floor before the fire, then, just then, all sound would be unpassing, memory buried, autumn gone. She knew it It was wonderful She could go on smiling, go on loving, higher always like an ascending spiral Tonight, when her mother was gilt in the chair Julie frowned, then trembled Did Millard know, did he see through it all? Was the week-end a success because Millard was Millard and couldn't be anything else? Was she just caught in a moment of deception? The room was still, and stiller became the new tiredness she felt Millie was telling her something She stared and nodded Her mother was writing in her room It was as though Millie had rung a bell clear and sharp She nodded again and hardly knew why Millard would be down soon

He found Julie tidying her hair in the oval mirror tilted like a deep shade over the ivory clock She smiled at him through the glass and chided him for his dark, sombre suit

"You're like an Archbishop "

'Unbecoming?'

'No, idiot I think I like Archbishops Do you remember the one we saw when we met last, at Oxford, outside that gloomy little shop that sold antiques?'

Millard was wrinkled over his pipe

"No Much too long ago' He was sucking his pipe to life "Anyhow quite sure I've never been interested in antiques in my life There was that queer wallpaper hanging behind the door in that little place in Wardour Street Yes," his pipe was annoying him and the wind was droning on the panes, "I did go in there."

He stopped and looked up at the dark ceiling Julie sat on the ottoman He seemed to be listening, away across the gulf she was helpless to prevent from widening She wanted to speak, to break something

"Wallpaper Funny thing to look for in Wardour Street"

His bottom lip seemed to protrude '*Les Adieux*' he whispered

Julie's hands were in her lap, pressing her dress hotly against her legs She tittered aloud

What did you say?

"He's playing astonishingly well Is that Robert?" Julie looked at him 'Robert?'

Coming somewhere from the house was the flourish of a piano She had not noticed it before

Robert Yes it must

Millard flung up a finger The threads vanished as the music swelled It splashed and leaped and lost any surface He sat down gingerly in an armchair And Julie felt dizzy She stood up and muttered an excuse about servants Millard did not answer, he merely raised his eyes and lowered them She closed the door and stood trembling a little in the hall Why, she wished she could sensibly know It was just for that minute she felt so deeply lost She went upstairs, deaf to the music which grew louder

She returned feeling better, or placid, or resigned She hardly knew She would be nice She wanted

Millard, that was all She opened the door and stood there holding it The room was empty, a shadowed canvas It was so still and the curtains were undrawn A chill struck her She jerked her head sharply. The music was faint, a slow movement of sound, like eddies through the sedge She closed the door Millard had not waited He was there, upstairs with Robert She sank into a chair Everything was so far distant, so out and unconnected Something stirred and she felt brave with dried tears Something gone, a farewell, there, more than one, all farewells The avenue she knew was bleak And the window cold The music stopped

*E. E. Goodman*

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### THREE POEMS

*BALUCHISTAN, NOVEMBER 1942*

I HAVE lived a year now in this country of contrasts  
And have seen the snow come twice upon the hills  
Today the trees, brown laced and clear,  
With the smoke blowing amongst them, blue,  
Reminded me and lifted my heart,  
But I knew that beyond, hidden,  
No parkland threw its green and downy grass  
About the woodland,  
And no wet wind brought the still sweet smell  
And heavy laden breath  
Of dank ditches,  
Leaf laden,  
Clear water running  
Under  
Beyond those trees is the pink plain and grey hills,  
And sometimes the women come into the sun,  
Dazzling red.  
Contrast, that is all

For this land is hard,  
And knows no tall brown and softly reaching pastures,  
With the cheese-cut clay of the ploughland,  
And the crows calling and wheeling into a  
  yellowing sun

For here there is a whiteness of light  
And no dreaming fields below the woods  
Here there is an ache of tired seeing,  
And the waking man is met by the sun

## THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

**I**F YOU have slept for years in your English bed  
You will not know this,  
You will not know the ache of desire  
Which fills the bones of a man across the sea  
For the common people  
This kills the soul of man  
This is forty years in the wilderness  
This is the darkness where no growth comes  
And the stars sicken under the moon  
There is no trial for the soulless man  
Yet he is robbed of his soul  
And left pondering among his broken images

## THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD, 1944

THERE IS no illusion, no dreams about us now  
We who have lived in boredom and isolation  
In these waiting years  
An isolation so full of people  
That we could not have met and known each other  
As forsaken ones,  
Had we not grown used to their cries  
And they, forgetting us,  
Had sought salvation in the brightly lighted  
                        laughter of their many mouths  
But we waited in the unrecognizing multitude,  
Waited and sought these many dawns that passed  
  us by

*J. G. B. Walker*

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## *THE PATTERN ON THE WAINSCOT*

### I

**F**OLLOW me and I will show you  
Something in the past or future,  
Which is which I really cannot  
Any longer say for certain  
Both are dark and both are lovely,  
Both tell fortunes in a circus  
In between the drums and clowning

I will show you how the hero  
Lay inside a lonely sunbeam  
By the cave where bears had reared him  
How an old blind centaur found him,  
Made his harp into a cradle,  
Taught him songs sung by his species  
In the mountains blinding sunlit  
Of the past or of the future  
Told him how himself was herald  
Of the humans at their coming;  
How the news came in the grey light  
In between the cloudy pillars  
Of the moonset and the sunrise.  
How the beasts rode out to meet them  
Far into the asphalt desert,  
And the trees bestrewed a pathway.

I will show you how the hero  
Grew as vivid as the sunshine,  
How for strength he was an oak-tree  
Yet his wondrous power resided  
Not on mass and coiling muscle  
But within his little finger  
When the summer's silk was drying,

When the centaur's wind borne wisdom  
Drenched no more the upland fount-heads,  
On that day the hero saddled  
Up the sun horse he had broken,  
Looked his last at grass and mountain  
'We shall meet' he told the centaur  
'At the far end of the portage,  
When the draped moon rides at anchor  
'And the swans drum through the pinewoods '

## II

So he started his long journey  
Through the country of the rainbows,  
Through the thundering cloud torrents  
Till again there was a silence  
And below the evening cloudscape,  
Like a new-cut water melon  
Veined and shimmering, green and velvet  
Arched between the equinoxes  
Rose the planet of his fathers,  
Wider than a mountain sunrise,  
Fathoms deep below the surface  
Where the meteors played like dolphins,  
Turning on slow wheels of music  
Rose the dear world of his fathers  
But, as night pronounced the shadows,  
Hosts of wings passed close above him  
And the sound of tears and laughter  
And he said 'This is a portent,  
'Those were children in migration  
Dashed against the icy mountains  
Stony face of earth's cold mother,  
'How few wings will make the passage  
Midnight turned he heard the minutes  
Murmur on the rock eternal,  
Said 'The ebb and flow will take me  
'Where Time sucks his teeth in hunger '  
But an arm stretched from the shadows  
Held his horse's wheaten forelock,

And a voice said 'Dear my infant,  
'Long forgotten of your brothers,  
'I am blind with too much watching  
'Up the gold-hoof-printed zodiac  
'For the Prince who has no mansion '

And he said 'Oh voice remembered  
'In the harp strings of my cradle.  
'Once you promised me all mansions,  
'All the world to hold in mortgage  
'Who has been to town before you ?'

And she answered 'Dear my infant,  
'Hope is strength to mortal eyesight,  
'None the less, there is a moment  
'Underneath the arch's keystone  
'When the vivifier gathers  
'Force to kill what he created  
'Then the burning tunnel shortens  
'Faster as it burns the brighter,  
'Till the flesh is wax that gutters  
'And we live alone with voices,  
'Stars of time, as those of distance,  
'Mustering in constellations  
'Which we petrify with titles  
'Of our hopes embalmed in star-dust  
'This, my love, is all your mansion,  
'This the pyramid that glitters  
'On the midnight's jet Sahara  
'This the past you must reconquer,  
'Or, if you so will, the future '

### III

Down he plunged into the chasms  
Where the rocks are monstrous ranges  
With the mould between and over,  
And he fought the sulphur-breathing  
Dragon in caves adamantine,  
Tasted of its burning life-blood  
And he understood the language  
Of the jewels perched in eyries

On the rock falls and crevasses  
Topaz, emerald, and ruby,  
Diamond and humming sapphire—  
Nightingales that graved his hearing  
With their splintered mica voices,  
Flickering in the rainbow valleys,  
Oscillating in shrill vaulting

Then he hunted down the nightmare  
That had brought his home to ruin,  
Hawk like stooped upon the vulture,  
Crushed the squid with flails of blubber  
All this you will see depicted  
When the firelight turns the pages,  
And you see the Sphinx in fancy  
Holding sleep between its forepaws  
Underneath the question's hammer,  
Or in mortuaries and prisons  
Hear its teeth snap dead the future  
You will know what he accomplished  
For his brothers and their children,  
Nameless yet, but unforgotten  
From his richness, as a fountain,  
Torches marched through leagues arterial,  
Spilled on plains and rose in cities  
Where his name was pealed on anvils,  
Anvils rocked in brazen steeples

And he felt a sickness on him  
For the cold air and the pinewoods  
And he said Death is a turning  
'Of a sick man's restless body  
From one orient to another  
'I have given my boughs for timber,  
And the bird has lost its shelter  
'Presently it will be flying'

#### IV

And he said 'Life has a rhythm  
'To the simple ear confusing,



'Generations are a cadence,  
'And the rhythm falls in epochs  
'I will be the vowel descending  
'In a consonantal garment,  
'Armour, priestly robes, or shoddy,  
'In what guise the word obscures me  
'I am "A", the world's beginning,  
'Archer, artisan, or artist,  
'I will prise apart your language—  
'Laughter, adoration, valour,  
'Charity, creation, fancy,  
'Stars and air and earth and water,  
'I am "A", creation's first-born

'When I killed the Sphinx, the cold one,  
'Even the dead cried out in torment,  
'And the alive for pain were sleepless  
'You who cannot yet forgive me,  
'Pay the vasts of space my tribute,  
'Stars and darkness locked in motion  
'And the winds of time that harry  
'Your cold skin of comprehension  
'One last avatar I give you—  
'That Assent, your twin in birth-pains '

And he said 'The word has called me,  
'In a breath fused all cross-currents,  
'Hovers now above the lake-side,  
'Fills the sails of my departure  
'I who loved beyond all creatures  
'Leave my loved ones to rejoice you,  
'Nurse your children to the music  
'Sung above your parents' cradles '

This and more is here recorded '  
In among the clowns and drumming  
Both the lovely ladies tell you  
How the line runs through your fingers  
Which is which I find confusing

## *VERBAL MUSIC IN TAGORE*

THE witchery of Tagore's words in his original Bengali poems is known only to Bengalis. The translation of a poem from one language to another is at best a poor affair. It can never recapture a fraction of the charm of the original. Prose can be translated but not poetry. Strangely enough however, in his own English translations, Tagore has revealed a control and a power over this alien instrument which are nothing short of surprising. The notes from this instrument sound at their best like the traditional music of Krishna's Flute. Fortunately Tagore while using a foreign medium did not adopt foreign moulds, the conventional forms of English poetry. The English prose poem, a form used with great effect by Walt Whitman, Edward Carpenter, D. H. Lawrence and some other writers, suited the spirit of Tagore's poetry better, and into this freer form he has cast his translations with exquisite effect.

To write a prose poem is as difficult as to write blank verse, though both must seem easy enough to the uninitiated. They lure with their apparent freedom and simplicity, but the result may often be baldness and vacuity and positively bad prose and bad verse.

Tagore's pieces in English are in prose form but we have somehow tacitly agreed to call them poems. And poems they are, not merely by virtue of their romantic content but also because of their persistent rhythm which is inseparable from the thought of the poet. I casually open *Gitanjali* (which by the way is not less romantic than it is spiritual) at the following passage

Clouds | héap upon clouds | and it dárkens (Poem 18)

Apart from the picture the seven words paint, as with a few vigorous strokes of the brush, it must be admitted by the least trained ear that the rhythm of the line is remarkable. On another page I find the following

And give me the strength | to surrender my strength | to  
thy will with love (Poem 36)

Taken out of their context these sentences are of course deprived of the charm that results from continuity of thought and expression. But my purpose, which I hope is clear enough, is to show what remarkable rhythm Tagore's expression possesses.

I could go on multiplying instances of this sort. The difficulty would not be of selection but of elimination. The only other writer whom I know to be Tagore's equal as a maker of the rhythmic phrase is the Irish dramatist, Synge.

But Tagore makes also what I might call wonderful vocal patterns in long passages which resemble the patterns that the feet of a deft dancer make on the smooth floor. Here is a long sentence from the same book

Early in the day it was whispered | that we should sail  
in a boat | only thou and I, | and never a soul in the world |  
know of this | our pilgrimage | to no country and to no land  
(Poem 42)

Here is another

The shepherd boy drowsed | and dreamed | in the shadow  
of the banyan tree, | and I laid myself down | by the water |  
and stretched my tired limbs on the grass (Poem 48)

And above all ·

Let all the strains of joy | mingle in my last song—the  
joy that makes the earth flow over in the riotous excess of  
the grass, | the joy that sets the twin brothers, | life and  
death, | dancing over the wide world, | the joy that sweeps  
in with the tempest, | shaking and waking all life with  
laughter, | the joy that sits still | with its tears on the open  
red lotus of pain, | and the joy that throws everything it  
has | upon the dust, | and knows not a word (Poem 58)

Such are the long sentences of Tagore That he was for any length of time apprentice in this art of writing in a foreign medium, and achieved such freedom of manipulation only after great practice, it seems a little difficult to believe, for even an adept would now and again falter. The question naturally suggests itself whether Tagore had a Tennysonian workshop in which he applied the chisel of harmony to his first unhewn phrases. I am inclined to think that he did not. The outpourings of his heart appear so spontaneous, and his writings from cover to cover so like one long symphony in sound of a most delicate texture that the magic could have been wrought only by a spirit steeped in poetry of which the very thought was rhythmic, and which involuntarily made use of monosyllabic words with the inevitable result of suppleness. The language of Tagore is very often metrical for yards together, and in such cases it is less prose than poetry even though lacking rhyme and a regular metrical design.

I have stressed the quality of persistent rhythm in Tagore's prose poems. "Verbal music" however is something more than this. It can exist without rhythm or vocal patterns. It is as the phrase implies, the music of words—even single words—which results from the long vowel and the repetition of consonants.

Arise shine for thy light is come and the glory of the  
Lord is risen upon thee

is an example of glorious use of long vowels, and in which before the grandeur of the "i's" and "o's", the "l's" and "r's", whose contribution to the total effect is not inconsiderable appear but like poor relations. Let the reader look for these two sources of verbal music in the passages from Tagore quoted above and he will not fail to find them. As an example, 'the shepherd boy *drowsed* and *dreamed*,' is not only compact of both but has the added charm of a variation.

Such highly poetic language with its never-ending rhythm of phrase would ordinarily cloy in the end Tagore's does not. What is it that saves it from being narcotic like Swinburne's? The answer is—the constant dignity of thought with which it is alive, the weirdness of the poet's imagination that perpetually delights with rich and startling metaphor, and the infinite variety of vocal patterns referred to above.

I remember attending in Cambridge a lecture on "Rhythm in English Prose", during the course of which the learned lecturer (Mr Tillyard) cited illustrative passages from some English authors. After the lecture I went up to him and recited to him a poem of Tagore's which I knew. The poem was

I run as a musk-deer runs in the shadow of the forest  
mad with his own perfume

The night is the night of mid-May, the breeze is the  
breeze of the south

I lose my way and I wander, I seek what I cannot get,  
I get what I do not seek

From my heart comes out and dances the image of my  
own desire

The gleaming vision flits on

I try to clasp it firmly, it eludes me and leads me astray  
I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek

The lecturer stood motionless with his eyes fixed on me as if he saw the musk-deer running hither and thither to the sound and movement of those words. The next time he met the class he had *The Gardener* with him. He read out the poem and declared that "for sheer rhythm" he had not read anything like it. My own later judgment taught me that as a piece of rhythmical expression it was not of the highest order and decidedly less beautiful than many other passages in Tagore. But can there be a greater and franker tribute paid to the genius of one who achieved this in a foreign tongue?

I AM AN AUTHOR Would you like to know what that means? No, you would like to know what it means to be a successful author I can't tell you Still, I have seen a few of them In fact, I have talked to one of them quite lately

In fact I drank whisky with him I doubt whether our conversation would have flowered much without this sprinkling of the dust He was not an Indian—in fact he was Everard Brockle Alcohol levels and amalgamates Our Indian civilization has grown brittle for want of it

The point is when you drink very seldom, a few drops make you see things differently We were alone together in a railway refreshment room and the bearer with his bottle threw a sort of magical rainbow cloak over us We stood together under a huge mushroom, looking out at the weather

I did, at least I suppose *he* talked from force of habit Or perhaps—he, after all was alone in a foreign country A foreign country is a huge Hall of Mirrors He was alone with a tipsy Indian who would soon forget whatever he might understand

As a matter of fact, though, I wrote it down next day in the train There was nothing better to write about After all there is nothing to write about in India You must have a patch of hard earth to stand on while you dig the next spadeful India is all swamp, nothing but swamp

The old Russians were fond of meeting mysterious strangers in trains and gathering their life stories The lighting in their carriages must have been feeble but they had superhumanly sharp eyes, those old novelists At least, so they pretended Dostoevsky

would have made something of this I suppose I could pretend to have peered into Brockle's inmost soul But all I wrote down was what he said.

After all, a character is like a table You know the table's size, shape, colour, function, but about the *table*, the thing-in-itself, nothing At least, I don't I am not a successful novelist I want to copy out what I put down about Brockle, instead of writing about myself, talking to myself

However, just to explain it. I don't remember now which station it was, some small place between Lahore and Calcutta where the train stopped for dinner, there was no dining-car I had had no food all day When I walked along the platform and came to the lighted refreshment-room, I went in, though I had not much money, and it was the First Class To go in there with an Intermediate Class ticket makes you feel very much like an unsuccessful author

There was no one else there for some reason I sat down in a corner, so as not to have the idle bearer staring at me from all four sides at once The tablecloth was clean, for some reason, and knives and forks with a napkin between reminded me of England I had more money then, but that was not why I liked being in England The point is that *India* looks so nice from over there, a neat little shape on a map, only waiting for active young men to come home and giye it a new coat of paint When you have been back home for a while you find out that the ship needs a new hull and new masts as well as new paint You have to sit down to get your second wind Most people never get it, especially unsuccessful authors

I only put this in here because I was looking at the knives and forks and thinking about this, so as not to think about the bearer who was standing four feet away watching the soup going into my mouth as if he was sorry for us both, though in fact it was the right soup in the right place, quite good enough for an unsuccessful author,—when Brockle came in

It would be difficult for me to describe him He had

on a light grey, very good suit. His face was plump and pink, especially when he tucked his chin into his collar to eat. His eyes were round, and slightly naive, different from the rest of his face. Or they may have only seemed like that. A human face is not made by the individual indeterminate mind living behind it. No single life is definite enough to give a face a definite contour. It has been put together by generations of ancestral minds and it tells nothing about an individual person. There is no more point in describing faces than in giving long descriptions of scenery, except in order to be a successful novelist.

In any case, I only noticed gradually, later on, what he looked like. At first I only noticed that after a careful survey of the room as though in search of company, or snakes perhaps, he sat down in the middle of the room under the strongest bulb.

There is something about an Englishman, even in warm weather, as if he had ice in all his pockets. The Ice Age lingered too long in Britain and left its traces in the marrow of their bones. In England you seldom notice it but here, where you see one of them among so many of us, it is like a single grown up coming suddenly among a set of noisy children. Or a single child among grown ups it comes to the same thing.

Having finished my soup it was hardly possible for me not to look at him. There was nothing else I could make the bearer think I was looking at. The Englishman looked at his soup, but he seemed to be tired of it before long. Then I saw him stare in my direction. A moment later he called to the 'waiter'.

It is natural to feel vaguely when a European turns his attention to you, that a row is going to begin. This prospect is unpleasant to a man who is eating a First Class dinner under (morally speaking) false pretences. I glanced at the bearer's face as he came forward. I thought I read there a gleam of satisfaction. We First Class travellers are inclined to be rather hasty with these attendants. To see us meeting our match occasionally is as good as a tip to them. I suppose



“Waiter!” said the diner, “ask that gentleman if he would have any objection to my joining him at his table”

His words were evidently meant for me, he spoke quite loudly and I was sitting within three yards, while the bearer did not understand them at all but looked irresolutely towards me

He should, I thought, have come and asked me himself Still, he did not look as if he had been in India for long, and it takes an Englishman at least ten years to learn enough to put such a complicated idea into Hindostani Also, the method he had adopted left me time to think and made it possible for me to refuse. I concluded that he meant to be polite

The politeness of the English is more burdensome than their rudeness, when you have got out of the habit of being used to it We hang garlands round a stranger’s neck, but they hang leaden chains A quarrel is simpler After all, *we* can all shout, even the least successful of us

I stood up with some kind of smile and told the bearer to bring the European’s soup-plate to my table He was surprised, but did so The stranger followed him

“Thank you so much,” he said, sitting down opposite me at my very small table, and putting his chair carefully into the right position “It’s so kind of you, really”

The word *really* received from his lips—they were plump and bountiful—at least five syllables The more well-educated an Englishman is, the fewer words he seems to know how to use, or to condescend to use, but he imparts to each of them a lavish intonation, as if running his hand over the back of a well-brushed prize dog It appears, especially when women speak, as if they have forgotten the meanings of the words they use, and are occupied with them only as pure sound

He went on with his soup, in the resplendent silence perfected by English soup-drinkers They call it *eating* soup, to draw your attention to the skill of the

performance I thought of asking the bearer for another plate and swallowing it as noisily as possible.

"Waiter!" he exclaimed suddenly, dropping his spoon. The bearer was at his elbow instantly. He expected a higher tip from this customer than from me.

"Take this away, and congratulate the cook on an extraordinary performance. Bring some whisky instead."

The bearer understood whisky, nothing else. The remark, made in the same suave tones as before, was again meant for *me*. I began to think it was time for me to say something, but I was tired by the long day in the inconceivably overcrowded train.

He looked up at me for the first time, and added "Whisky may do harm to our morals, but I feel sure this soup would harm our livers, and it's better to be an evil liver than to have one."

He did not emphasise the words *be* and *have*, as one would to make the point of a phrase clear to a dull listener. This struck me as a compliment which, more than the little joke, made me smile, and this made me feel less dull.

I enquired "Have you been travelling long?"

He paused to rearrange his napkin. This pause, before answering a simple question, is English. It suggests, according to your frame of mind, either that they deem the most trifling query from *you* important enough to demand full consideration or that they are bored to death by your tedious importunity. I wondered, in the meantime whether he had joined me because he had mistaken me for one of those Rajahs whom the tourist expects to find at large in any corner of India.

After this interval of close thought, or abstraction he returned "Do you mean today—or in general?"

This kind of evasive rejoinder, which baffles the questioner by showing him that his question was really a compound or ambiguous one, impossible for a plain man to answer plainly and lures him further out from cover, is also English. In this case, it struck me as a

reproof aimed at my stupid response to his adroit opening of the conversation

"I meant today "

"Really, I've been on this confounded train so long that I've forgotten where I got on it and given up hope of ever getting off it "

If I had not spent several years in England, this would have annoyed me Our politeness consists in not evading questions, then in not asking questions Or if questions must be asked, we soften them by an oblique form of words, they by an oblique tone of voice

But he went on, without exacting a further advance on my part "As to—in general, that is in India,—two months, including about six weeks on this and other trains "

It occurred to me that there were more serious differences between us than modes of expression The brain gives off electric vibrations, and when you meet an Englishman—a stranger—in India, these vibrations arrange themselves in a protective and very complex pattern and become almost visible—to you but perhaps not to him That is, when you are in that state of mind However, it is not my state of mind that I am putting down Besides, it also occurred to me while he was helping himself to potatoes from the bearer's tray, that we *were* together at a very small table A certain amount of blood has flowed in the last forty years, which has brought our races—individually—closer together Even at the worst, a corpse and a conqueror occupy the same plane

"I'm so glad to have fallen in with someone and escaped a solitary dinner," went on my guest—as, in several senses, I was obliged to regard him "Do try some of these curious potatoes A poor ignorant tourist mustn't neglect any chance of picking up knowledge, must he ?"

He had certainly not picked up much from me yet, but his irony, if there were any, might be at the expense of Indian vegetables rather than at mine But the word *tourist* was more tangible

"Tourist?" I repeated "Are you travelling about India in this weather for the sake of travelling?"

"Yes and no Chiefly no Travelling helps to provide me with my bread and butter, and if it throws in an occasional potato of this type, I mustn't grumble By the way, Mr       ?"

"Dev Narayan "

If he felt disappointed at my failure to materialize as a Maharaja, he concealed it In fact he seemed highly gratified, though in the style of a man who knows how to check any unwelcome exuberance of feeling

"Mr Narayan—yes        My name is Brockle " This he added as a comparatively insignificant after thought "I was just going to say, Mr Narayan, do you think that fellow caught my reference to whisky?"

I looked round for the bearer, as it happened, he was just shuffling forward with the bottle

"Ah, here he is One struggles to make oneself clear, but these waiters of yours all seem to be bent on imitating the inscrutable Orientals in the American films, don't they?"

At his gesture the bearer filled two glasses I took a sip too quickly, without waiting for him It was a long time since I had done any drinking I laughed, and wondered whether my laugh appeared to him a response to his remark, or the reaction of an unaccustomed throat to whisky I was not sure myself He gave a smile that only a successful man could have given, and lifted his glass It was just then that I realized who he was

' *Everard Brockle!* ' I said

He affected a look of surprise (He was too good an actor to disguise the fact that he was acting)

"I saw your photograph in the paper only today "

"Nothing gives me a poorer opinion of your Press than the frequency with which I meet myself in it If I were an active volcano or a new bomb, they could hardly make more of me So you know my face already        Nothing worse than that, I hope?"

I had taken another sip by now, and as my stomach was still more than half empty, it worked quickly. It was hardly possible to go on eating those potatoes, he had blighted them. Besides, the touch of naïveté in his eyes was more apparent now, and made it clear that he expected me to tell him I had read his books. I told him I had.

As a matter of fact, I *have* read some of them. That is, looked into them, as an unsuccessful author looks into the works of a successful author.

“So that is what you meant about travelling?”

“I confess it, Mr. Narayan. Yes, do have another glass. Yes, I am writing a book on India.”

“Of course,” I replied. I leaned back and looked him in the face for the first time. The whisky was beginning to shed an intangible opalescence about the table, and the rest of the room to recede into the shadows. “What else could make you leave England in the middle of a war?”

“A humble patriot charging himself with a duty to his Empire. You put it most tactfully, Mr. Narayan.”

That *was* what I meant. I had not said it, though I had not been in the habit of speaking civilized English for some time, and irony is a matter of civilization. After all, speaking a foreign language with a man whose own language it is means throwing stones uphill at a man who is throwing them downhill at you. He was very quick.

I offered him a cigarette, as he dismissed the bearer's offer of a sweet. He accepted it as if he had never seen a better cigarette in his life.

“Thanks so much. . . On the boat, you know, I gave up smoking for a whole week—in public—because I had thought of a rather clever phrase about the evils of tobacco. It was the greatest sacrifice I have ever made to art.”

“What was it?”

He waved his cigarette.

“Oh, I couldn't bore *you* with it, Mr. Narayan. I only meant—clever enough for the sort of people one

meets on a boat But it was thrown away on them And when I landed, and made a present of it to some reporters who were kind enough to meet me well, when I read it in their papers next day, it was simply gibberish You may have noticed it, possibly?"

"I don't have much time to "

"Of course not, of course not But really, your reporters *are* a little eccentric, don't you think?"

"I think we are all rather eccentric in India A government always gets the public it deserves "

He looked at me as though I had said something very clever

"I hope the same isn't true of authors," he returned "My dear Mr Narayan—one drifts on to the reef of politics, doesn't one?—you can't suspect me of idolizing the present administration, I'm sure Very far from it! Not that I've studied it of course, but I've met some of the administrators Only just at the moment naturally, with this war running on, you understand "

"Any such book has to be a contribution to the war effort," I ended

"You see things so clearly, Mr Narayan Are you an Oxford man? No? You have the Oxford eye for nuances, which I find lamentably rare in this country Yes, there has been so much talk in America, you know and there was a feeling that what was needed was a man who could say he had seen India's jungles with his own eyes, and at the same time "

He paused, modestly I picked up my glass and said for him (But from this point I had better put myself in the third person It would be wrong to say that with the whisky, I was no longer myself But I was no longer Dev Narayan He was floating out, away from me Alcohol loosens the bond between these Siamese twins Well, Dev Narayan said )

"And at the same time wouldn't sound as if he had never seen anything else in his life Someone who could make phrases flower in the Indian desert "

Dev Narayan was glad to see that this time Brockle's

appreciation was not acted. This talking in Brockle's idiom reminded him agreeably of a better past. Or rather, of a past with a better future. I, on the other hand, disliked Brockle on principle (if an unsuccessful Indian author can talk of his principles—or rather, think of them, he can easily talk of them) and disliked Dev Narayan for liking him. But the next sip of whisky strengthened Dev Narayan and weakened me.

“‘Phrases in the desert.’ That would almost do for my title! That is very good. Swell! I beg your pardon, the word slipped out of my mouth. I require it at times, it suggests the unspoiled, the juvenile.”

“‘The American,’” said Dev Narayan. “‘A popular author has to be all things to all men.’”

“Not excluding Americans. They’re so rich, aren’t they? God moves in a mysterious way, Mr Narayan. Are you sure you aren’t an Oxford man?”

“Perfectly.”

“Dear me. Cambridge, you know. They’re all so serious at Cambridge. Those Puritans, in Cromwell’s time—Cambridge has never got over them, it never had an eighteenth century, it merely took to drink, it fell asleep on Isaac Newton and woke up on Macaulay.”

“I went to London, not Cambridge.”

He puffed at his cigarette hard, like a man rallying from an unprovoked blow.

“You were wise, Mr Narayan. You made the best of a bad job. Yes, decidedly. At London University a man is within striking distance of civilization.”

“I also studied at Sheffield for some time.”

“*Really?*” (This word had now elongated itself to at least seven syllables.) “You astound me. Do people *study* up there? I thought they made cutlery. What do they study?”

“My family wanted me to learn economics and banking.”

“Ah, the banks and brayings of bonny Sheffield. I’ve never been there. One has to draw the line some-





# YOU'LL LAUGH HOWL SHRIEK

subtitled by the 4 men



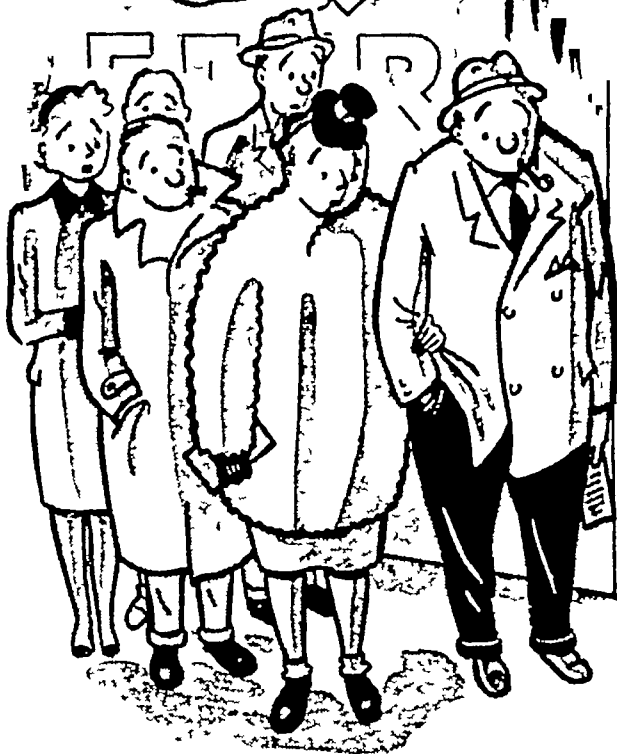
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SEE FULL  
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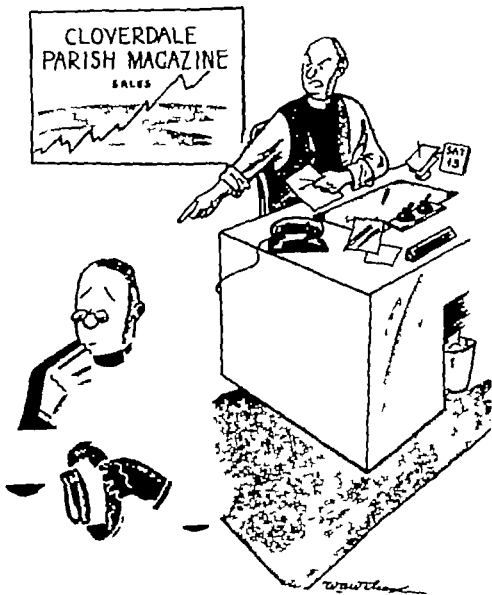


QUEUE FOR  
2ND. SHOW  
HERE

ALL WEEK  
GAGS  
GIRLS  
GIGGLES  
!



Went to see



And don't come back without a story!"



where, even in this plebeian age. What one yearns for, up there in the north of England, is the company of someone who can speak English. A good phrase released up there would fall to the ground like a fine bird—asphyxiated. But *you* came back to tell the tale, it seems?"

"I gave it up before long, because instead of business I wanted to "

(I reminded Dev Narayan that Brockle did not want to hear what he wanted to do, and he went on )

"By the way, your equally famous compatriot "

"Mr Beverley Nichols," he interjected (His interruptions were particularly suave, like a violin interrupting a flute )

"Yes I wondered—he's just written a book about India "

"You have a distinguished gift of irony, Mr Narayan. Really—I insist on regarding you as an Oxford man "

"I meant, isn't his book more or less on the same lines as the one you are planning?"

Brockle gazed at me with every mark of being unable to trust his own ears

"Do I hear you aright Mr Narayan!" he exclaimed. "My dear sir! Mr Nichols' book is worlds apart from mine. His is the sun, Mr Narayan—the bright Indian sun, lighting up all that its rays fall upon. Mine will be the merest farthing dip to it "

"He certainly knows how to ride the high horse," said Dev Narayan, puzzled for a moment how to take these hyperboles

"And to look well on the high horse, you mean. Exactly! A rider of his stature would look well on the most gigantic mount. An elephant, Mr Narayan, not a horse! He advances through India like like "

"Timur or Babar," Dev Narayan supplied, since Brockle's metaphor had obviously outstripped his resources of Indian history

"Thank you. Timur or Babar, while your worn out institutions fall flat in the dust before him. Cortés

conquering Mexico with four hundred men was child's play compared with my friend Nichols conquering India with nothing at all. A Daniel come to judgment! Do try one of *my* cigarettes "

He held out a match for me with such a naively candid sparkle in his eye that Dev Narayan burst out laughing

"So you don't propose to follow in *his* majestic footsteps?"

"I, my dear sir? I trot behind his mastodon on my little donkey "

"We are not to expect a Verdict from you, then?"

"Mr Narayan, a case tried and settled by so learned and impartial a judge can't possibly be reopened. Mr Nichols has pronounced the verdict "

"And passed sentence "

"And it only remains to carry it out. You see, my dear fellow, I am only here for three months or so. I can't hope to discover much about India in that time, *can* I?"

"I wonder," remarked Dev Narayan, who had not failed to realize the superiority of the cigarette he was now smoking, and by this time had (so to speak, and perhaps literally as well) his elbows on the table, "whether Nichols will travel further east and give the world his verdict on China. And then a verdict on Russia on the way home. In fact, he ought to tour the world constantly, like an Assize Judge, striking terror into scoundrels everywhere "

"Excellent," rejoined Brockle, actually smacking his lips, "until we are finally privileged to receive his Verdict on Heaven. My dear fellow, when you and I were at Oxford. Oh! I was really forgetting. An itinerant Justice of Assize! Excellent!"

"In fact," went on Dev Narayan, "I'm so impatient to read his Verdict on Venezuela, that I almost blame him for wasting a whole year on *this* miserable country "

"Quite, quite," cried Brockle. "Most interesting country, Venezuela!"

"Especially as Nichols, in his zeal for administering justice, will not only deal with the charges against the defendant, but will drag the whole of his private life out. We shall know all about Venezuelan women, music, food, scenery—and everything treated with such an authoritative touch!"

"Dear Mr Narayan, you're drinking nothing at all! Do let me fill up your glass. It's so pleasant to find that you really appreciate my friend Nichols. As to his staying in India unnecessarily long, we must bear in mind that he spent a good deal of his year here in hospital."

"Otherwise, with his lightning intelligence, he would have been able to cross-examine all the witnesses and reach his decision in much less time."

"*Much* less, my dear fellow. It's his amazing versatility, you know, that enables him to deal with every topic off hand. When one has written as many books on so many subjects. My friend Nichols is a master of every style."

"And excels in the tragical-comical-historical-pastoral."

"As Polonius would say," responded Brockle, draining his glass with great satisfaction. "Of course, it's no disparagement to his quickness of thought to surmise that before coming to India he must have employed several years in reading about the country. How else could he have acquired so profound and voluminous a knowledge?"

"How else could he have learned that the Sikhs were distinguished by their intellectual power, for instance? Not by any mere vulgar process of travelling."

"And then," pursued Brockle, "think of his amazing industry in picking up at least three Indian languages in the course of his tour!"

"Did he?" asked Dev Narayan.

"Isn't it three he mentions? It may have been more."

"Yes, but I think he only mentions casually his making some acquaintance with Hindi and Bengali and Tamil, he doesn't claim."

"My dear fellow!" interrupted Brockle, as if disappointed by his companion's momentary dullness "Don't you see that that is just his modesty? His splendid modesty, Mr Narayan! Why, I'm positive that he speaks all those languages as well as I speak English!"

"His readers in England will probably think so"

"And naturally! It's expected, you know, in these days, that a professional traveller should learn the local languages We literary men have to compete with so many laborious professors and academic hacks Personally, I haven't even learned the *names* of these languages, but I shall have to create some sort of impression—you understand—a touch here and a touch there—it creates confidence"

"You're quite right not to waste time on learning them," said Dev Narayan "The business of a traveller is to travel"

"And how conscientiously my friend Nichols did it! He tells us himself that he travelled in India for thousands of miles!"

"Of course," Dev Narayan pointed out, "if you spent five or six days in a train and went from Bombay through Lahore, Calcutta and Madras, you would have covered some thousands of miles"

"In a certain sense that may be true," conceded Brockle judicially "I myself have done it—if my memory is correct But the English public doesn't know that, you know, and my friend Nichols would shrink from seeming to exaggerate his exploits. When he talks of thousands, I've no doubt he means scores of thousands Anything savouring in the slightest of conceit or self-advertisement would be exquisitely painful to my friend Nichols"

The delicate gusto with which Brockle wafted this sentence into the air, as though blowing a beautiful soap-bubble, is indescribable Dev Narayan waited a moment, to let it float away undisturbed by any ruder breath I think he even glanced at the bearer in the

corner, expecting to see the ripple manifest itself on the blank surface of his face as it drifted over him

"Well," he resumed "I mentioned him because you said something about keeping in view your patriotic duty while writing your book "

Brockle made a slight bow in acknowledgment of this choice of words, and his eyebrows beckoned me to proceed

"Hasn't Nichols done that duty for you?"

"How do you mean, my dear fellow?" Dev Narayan hesitated "Whenever you are at a loss for words in English, Mr Narayan, consult Shakespeare "

"Well, he might have said 'Hasn't your friend Nichols already laid enough flattering unction to the soul of John Bull?'"

"Astonishing!" cried Brockle "Astonishing!" (By this time he paid Dev Narayan the superior compliment of not thinking it necessary to pay any facial compliment to his display of intelligence) "Why, my dear fellow! Mr Nichols is the soul of impartiality His book is not written with the slightest design of pleasing John Bull, or the bull-dogs of Downing Street, or anybody else He tells us so himself!"

"So if *your* conclusions happen to lean in the same direction, it will be the merest coincidence "

"The merest, Mr Narayan Try another cigarette Yes, that lofty impartiality of Mr Nichols, that aloofness from all wordly considerations of profit or popularity—they are not for me I confess it I can no more emulate them than I can approach his genius as a student of politics—as a clairvoyant, I might almost say "

"Genius is an infinite capacity for faking brains," said Dev Narayan Brockle drew his chair closer to the table, on which he leaned intimately

"If I had known that I was to meet you in India, Mr Narayan, it would have been enough inducement to come I needn't say But how could I know that? And what else could induce an ordinary man to come out here if not considerations of profit and popularity?"



Dev Narayan glanced again at the bearer, with his dreary grey whiskers and operative uniform Brockle followed his glance, and shrugged

"You read Milton too?" he remarked. "*An old and haughty nation, proud in arms*"

The glittering suit of Miltonic chain-armour, thrown suddenly over that rheumatic old figure, made an overpowering caricature. I, as an Indian, resented it, but Dev Narayan, carried away by wit and whisky, did not. He was only half an Indian.

"You see my point," pursued Brockle, satisfied with his effect. "And between ourselves, in matters like this it is as well to know which way the wind is blowing at Whitehall. It helps to fill the sails of one's sales in America, if I may descend to a pun."

"It would be very interesting to me to know something of your methods, Mr. Brockle."

"I can have no confidences from *you*, my dear fellow. Try another glass." (I had begun to feel that Dev Narayan was going too far, but he pushed his glass over willingly, and Brockle filled them both.) "Ah, Mr. Narayan, if I had many readers like you! One has to bury one's fine phrases, one's little gold sovereigns, in such a mass of plum-pudding for the child-like public. Publicity! Popularity! One has to be always watching the fashions and saying the right word in the right place—putting a book on the market at just the right moment. My book on vegetarianism, a few years ago. I'm glad *that* fashion didn't last long. However, *revenons à nos moutons, mon cher*. You speak French, of course?"

"Yes. I went from Sheffield to Paris."

"Delightful," said Brockle, very slightly disconcerted. "Then let us talk English. What were we saying?"

"About your approach to India, Mr. Brockle. Do you see any future at all for us?"

Brockle shook his head gently.

"Your languages have no need of a future tense, Mr. Narayan. All they require is the past indefinite

and the present subjunctive Future, my dear sir? The future of India is lost in the mists of antiquity "

A dim sensation stirred in my memory, as if I had heard something like this epigram before. But the mists of alcohol swirled over any effort at recollection. On the other hand Brockle, if there was any plagiarism, obviously had no consciousness of it. He deployed his handkerchief, leaned back, and looked across the table with an *undisguised* call for applause. He was again, for the moment, a budding young wit in the Oxford Union. I (as distinct from Dev Narayan) began for the first time to like him. His love of words, at any rate, had survived his commercial successes. I handed him a cigarette. He accepted it as a well-earned tribute.

"I felt sure you would like it. Yes, it's clever, isn't it? The mists of antiquity. I see you relish it, Mr. Narayan."

"A phrase like that is a useful silk parachute for escaping from an awkward problem."

"Good!"

"But it doesn't quite explain."

"There you reach its essence, my dear fellow. In a popular book on India, as in a detective novel, the author doesn't quite explain. Hence his effects. It's like all conjuring tricks, you know. Of course, I don't refer to books like my friend Nichols', *he* explains everything, with masterly thoroughness. But with me the epigram comes first. Beauty is truth, Mr. Narayan. Truth is often far from beautiful. You follow me, I'm sure?"

"So far."

"Push the bottle, will you? Really, it's on account of that phrase that I'm in India. I'm here to find a costume for it to wear, so to speak. It occurred to me one night in Piccadilly, three months ago. The clock then striking twelve."

"But as regards India?"

"India? Ah, yes—poor India. With you, Mr. Narayan, I forget my whereabouts. I fancy myself

back in civilization. Conversation in this country is rather depressing as a rule, isn't it?"

"Conversation in English, yes. Well, we have a good deal to depress us. Have you met many women, though?"

"My dear fellow, I may speak freely to a citizen of the world—to an Oxford man, that is, when you remove your women's veils you do us a favour, but when you unfasten their tongues you more than cancel it."

"Why?"

"They combine the charming languor of the antique with the deplorable mannerisms of youth. It's like the Venus of Milo telling you about a school tea-party. Venus should be seen and not heard."

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to make a note of that phrase?" Dev Narayan suggested. (He had learned by now to distinguish Brockle's impromptus from the phrases already entered in the notebook. Brockle was again faintly disconcerted, but expressed only gratified surprise.)

"If you are good enough to think it worth while, as a connoisseur. Pardon me for one moment while I scribble it down. The bottle stands with you. Really," he added, replacing his neatly bound notebook, "your company is positively inspiring. After the Willington Club, you fall like the gentle rain from heaven. Really, I assure you."

"I still haven't learned much about your method, Mr Brockle. Have you made any start at writing your book yet?"

"I've nearly finished it. I broke the back of it on the way out. It's a long voyage."

"Yes, but still."

"I sailed on purpose, instead of flying. An English liner offers more amenities than an Indian city; and so far as my public is concerned, five months out of England is as good as five months in India. I'll finish it on the way home."

"Isn't it rather a strain to work at that speed?"

"Dear me, no. Eighty thousand words, of which

thirty thousand done in India on the spot Say twenty-five thousand for each voyage, of about twenty five days You see it's a mere thousand words a day, chiefly padding Two hours work at the outside It's a bagatelle, Mr Narayan "

"I suppose it is, when you reduce it to arithmetic But not a bagatelle when you *elevate* it to arithmetic in the form of royalties "

"Far from it A familiar name—an energetic publisher—the thing is done If there were an easier way of earning a living, I flatter myself that I should have found it "

"But how exactly do you set about collecting material?"

"Well, as you know, I've no turn for vast researches in my friend Nichols' style To begin with a few dinners in London, with a set of disgruntled Indians and grunting Anglo-Indians That gave me the general *mise en scène* Dull work, Mr Narayan—and expensive you can't imagine the price of good wine over there, and one doesn't like giving poor stuff even to people who don't know the difference, does one?"

Dev Narayan gave a loud laugh at the idea of his giving wine of any sort to anybody He was feeling cordial enough by this time to find such an idea very amusing

"Still," went on Brockle, "I charge that sort of thing to my publishers, and wading through a pile of books on India would be even duller I can't bear to read much, nearly every book one picks up nowadays seems to have been written either in Cambridge or in Chicago "

"And then?"

"Then, my dear fellow, on the boat, more conversations You can't get away from them, in any case, so you might as well make something out of them "

"Yes, transmute them from lead to gold "

"Excellent Yes, you can make readable journalism out of the most boring gossip You know, one has to pocket one's feelings in any case and put everything

into a bright, journalistic style It makes it easy to read, and the dear reader never suspects how easy it must have been to write So in the morning I lean over the railings—what d'you call the edge of a ship? balustrade? bulwark?—and fish in the waves for my pretty little phrases, talk at meals; the hack-work of writing between tea and dinner, then I relax ”

“Ariel in the morning, Caliban in the afternoon. And since you disembarked?”

“I have just been wishing myself at home most of the time A dreadful country, Mr Narayan You're too broadminded to mind my saying so I shall insist on higher royalties when I get back if I ever *do*, when I sit in these trains of yours and crawl along like a mouse in the Sahara, I doubt it A writer who visits India can fairly class himself as belonging to a Dangerous Occupation, and expect to be paid accordingly.”

“But apart from locomotion, what do you *do*? Do you go about interviewing people?”

“As a matter of form, yes It impresses stay-at-home readers very much to think of you bearding the great X or the famous Y in his den The impression you aim at is that X and Y unlocked the inmost treasures of their hearts to you, when in fact they only repeated what they say every day to everybody who goes to see them ”

“Have you found any of them interesting?”

“Not till tonight, *mon cher* Have another glass, won't you? You know, these people either can't talk at all, or can't stop talking Not many of the first sort, to do them justice It seems to me that nearly everyone in India is a born public speaker, especially in private ”

“I might say that of *your* country, Mr Brockle—only the other way round ”

“Of course you could! Say it, by all means! But here, you know, the conversation goes round and round like a rowing-boat with only the oar on one side pulling

By the way, is there anyone I ought to stop and see at Allahabad?"

"I don't think there's anyone there who could teach you much Mr Brockle "

He smiled good humouredly

'Purely as a matter of form I put myself in your hands unreservedly "

"The biggest man there perhaps is old Sir "

"The fattest? My dear fellow, don't inflict any more of your 'Sirs' on me The Arabian Nights are a far less extraordinary collection than your Indian Knights "

"Then you might try old Moti Lal, the great businessman "

"H'm " said Brockles dubiously "Does he talk English?"

"Yes, of course "

"Yes, of course, everyone does, but I mean—does he *know* any English?"

"He makes himself understood, I imagine "

"If he has nothing better than a million pounds or two to prove that, let's take him as read At one place, you know, I went to a cricket match with a fellow, who suddenly told me that one of the fieldsmen was a prostitute I put my field glasses on the man, and pulled out my notebook, with a view to inserting a chapter on Indian Sport, but then it transpired that he meant a *substitute* "

"You must have felt as we do when we hear Indian names in the B B C news," replied Dev Narayan "Incidentally, this train doesn't go through Allahabad "

"Doesn't it? Good, you take a weight off my mind The weight of Moti Lal and his millions a sense of duty might have driven me to see him "

"But may I enquire what is the guiding thought, the spinal column, of your book?"

"Well, the essential thing is to be positive—sweeping—trenchant If you want to describe a man as having something in him, call him the most important man

in Asia Subtleties only give the public indigestion  
No half measures! *Il faut bouleverser, vous savez*  
Suppose I were writing a book on Insurance Companies  
. . . I may do it one day—to such base uses do we come

I should make it my argument that every Company  
in the country was certain to be bankrupt within five  
years "

"How would you prove it?"

"Economics is a very mysterious subject, you know,  
and a writer can easily be mysterious without knowing  
any economics I should hint at more than I stated  
And the result? A sensation, brisk sales, photographs  
of Brockle everywhere with a significant look in his  
eye "

"But what if they hadn't gone bankrupt at the end  
of five years?"

"I should have written five other books by then,  
*mon cher* In any case, I could suggest that my  
timely warning had enabled Insurance to pull itself  
together at the eleventh hour, and sell another edition  
to the grateful public "

"And you propose to achieve the same tactical sur-  
prise in your present book?"

"Ah, yes, my present book . . . *nous nous sommes  
un peu égarés, n'est-ce pas?* Yes, undoubtedly The  
modern writer performs in a huge theatre, Mr Narayan,  
where nuances are lost except on the front rows For  
the pit, he must lay on the grease-paint and gesticulate  
In the present case"—his manner grew still more  
confidential—"what do we find? We find Hindus  
and Muslims " (Like all Europeans, Brockle said  
Muzlims) "Which of them do we like? Neither  
Neither of them, my dear fellow As a Muzlim, you  
will agree with me about the Hindus, as an Oxford  
man, you will agree with me about the Muzlims "

"I owe you an apology," said Dev Narayan "I'm  
a Hindu, as my name might possibly have conveyed  
to you "

Brockle waved his cigarette, as one dismissing a  
trifle

"Don't apologize, *mon cher* All such details—names and dates and figures—will be set more or less right by some well informed hack before I publish anything One makes these concessions to the morbid realism of the age—or I should never have come to India at all Personally, the only realism I care about in literature is over the question of royalties "

'I gather that your intention is to attack the Congress *and* the League "

'With fine impartiality You know, one used to scold A and say 'See what a good boy is B ' But when A and B begin to show the same symptoms of ingratitude—ingratitude, Mr Narayan, sharper than the serpent's tooth And each side will read me to see what I say about the other And everyone is bound to agree with *something* I say, and when you agree with what a writer says, you always find it uncommonly penetrating and sagacious "

"What do you think about Jinnah?"

"I don't think anything at all about him, my dear fellow You mean—what do I *say* about him? I say ' (Brockle pulled out his notebook, and affected to refresh his memory, though Dev Narayan felt sure that he had his epigram by heart ) " 'Mr Jinnah is the greatest of modern explorers, others have discovered nations, but he has invented one, and it only remains for him to decide on its latitude and longitude ' Not bad my dear fellow?"

"Not bad And Jawaharlal?"

"Who? Oh Nehru Nehru fiddling while Asia burns eh? He takes himself too seriously, Mr Narayan A Cambridge man when you have said that you have said everything "

"Gandhi?"

'Not a gentleman, as Wellington said of Napoleon Look at his wardrobe "

"I doubt whether anyone who falls foul of John Bull can really be considered a gentleman," said Dev Narayan Brockle laughed

"Not until he has been dead and buried for a good



many years, perhaps, and got *high* enough to catch the nose of a Cambridge historian. No, my dear fellow, your Congressmen are capitalists, your League men are landlords. *We* are democrats. It is for the poor down-trodden peasant, the wretched Untouchable, that one's pen bleeds today."

"Then who is to be the hero of your melodrama? The conscientious official, struggling on against the vices and follies of India with his eyes fixed on the beacon of liberty, equality and fraternity?"

"No, Mr Narayan. No. Ours, as I said, is an age of realism. One's aim today is—not precisely the naked truth. nudity is always indecent, and the English reader is too respectable to want that, he doesn't insist on verity, but he does insist on verisimilitude. Verisimilitude, my dear fellow, is everything."

"Well, unless you want to keep your hero a secret until he bursts upon the stage."

"No, no, of course not, I'm only too glad to give you a pre-view of him. As a matter of fact, I give the *beau rôle* to two people, both possessing the all-important virtue of novelty—the Gonds and the Parsees."

"The Gonds!" cried Dev Narayan, taken aback in spite of himself.

"Or the Bhills—what does it matter? By the way, I must make a note some time of whereabouts these people live. Bengal, isn't it?"

"No, that's the Santals. Chiefly in the C. P."

"Ah? And I hear you have some sort of gipsies in the Panjab, haven't you? I shall have a good word to say for them as well. Yes, my dear fellow, it's among these despised, simple-minded, pure-hearted aborigines, who have never heard the word Politics, that I see the true soul of India, the future regeneration of your country."

"A rather distant future, won't it be?"

"The more the better. John Bull doesn't like things to move too rapidly. It takes him most of the 20th century to get used to the idea that the 19th century has started."

"I see the notion," said Dev Narayan "But why the Parsees?"

"Splendid people, my dear fellow Their clothes may be a little eccentric—I went to the trouble of meeting one or two of them—but I intend to exhaust my vocabulary on their behalf "

"Will anybody recognize your portrait of them?"

"The Parsees will and they're wealthy enough to afford a few rupees for my book "

"And not numerous enough to be—ungrateful But I say, now I come to think of it, doesn't Nichols extoll the Parsees very highly, too?"

"Dear me, does he really? Careless of me to overlook that, in turning his pages Of course," said Brockle, "if my friend *Nichols* admires the Parsees, there must be something really admirable about them, which I wasn't aware of He never risks an opinion except after exhaustive study "

"Curious that your choice should have been the same as his "

"Curious, indeed," returned Brockle blandly, "how at times the idle guess of the armchair loungeer will coincide with the mature conclusions of the trained investigator " (The slight annoyance still in his face when he began this sentence had vanished by the time he had undulated himself through its elegant modulations ) "In any case, you have some Armenians in India, haven't you? They will serve my turn just as well "

"No doubt," said Dev Narayan "As to the Gonds—there, at least, nobody is likely to steal your thunder "

"Who steals my thunder, steals trash It's only my lightning I care about—my phrases, you know When I retire I shall pick them all out of the heaps of nonsense where they lie buried and put them together in one little volume "

"Brockle's Epigrams "

"You smile, my dear fellow, but Brockle has his dreams I render unto the mob the things that are

the mob's; but I have never sacrificed an epigram to please it . . .

. . . I don't remember so well after that Not that Dev Narayan had drunk too much, but the apparition of the bearer, with his bill for the dinner we had hardly eaten, made a rent in the pavillion of opalescence spread round the table, and the light began to ebb away. Besides, the problem of the bill brought me and Dev Narayan together again, it needed us both, so I couldn't listen easily any longer to what he was saying.

I paid for the dinners, including the whisky. Brockle allowed this with his usual charm, as if conferring a favour. So he was, I suppose, from the point of view of civilization. It left me practically no money for the rest of the journey. But it was necessary, to convince myself that I had not been bribed to enjoy listening to Brockle talking about India.

I left him at his carriage and got back to my own just before the train started. It was half an hour late, of course. It was a relief to find that most of my fellow-passengers were already asleep, or struggling to sleep. They and their baggage and children were piled up and thrown about in the narrow space as if a giant had picked up the carriage and given it a shaking. An old man's head sagged over the seat I had left. I forced my way on to a heap of bags in a corner. Someone's legs hung down from above near my eyes. The dim bulb glowing in the foul air made a scene like Milton's—no light, but rather darkness visible. I wondered what motives could have dragged all these people into this movable Black Hole. Money, most of them. Somewhere in India a bell rang, and we all jostled through the streets to get a handful of the gold being scattered there. Then somewhere else, and we all rushed another way. And that charlatan—as the public had insisted on making him left to himself, a good sort of minor Oscar Wilde—in the First Class compartment, getting into a pair of silk pyjamas, adjusting the fan, stretching himself out comfortably

to think of phrases about India Which we would help to pay him for An unsuccessful author squatting on a heap of dirty bags The mists of antiquity No future Yes, a bad headache Yes, it was hard to imagine this creaking old train capable of moving through time as well as space We were not marching into the future we were retreating into it with our faces turned back towards the past whose hundred arms menaced us continually, step by step I didn't sleep that night

*John L Christian\**

## GOA TODAY

*Senhora de Todo o Oriente* Camoens

**I**N THE GREAT days of empire *Goa Dourada* was the center of the Portuguese holdings east of the Arabian Sea It still retains a charming but slightly faded glory which takes the visitor back to the days when it was without doubt the most fabulous city ever built by Europeans in Asia. At that time there was some merit in the local proverb, "He who has seen Goa need not go to Lisbon"

Even today Goa is of considerable sentimental and patriotic value to Portugal, although its importance as an economic asset is not impressive It is, however, of no small strategic importance Portugal is one of the few European countries having the capability of operating air and water transport to the Orient and Oceania, with bases all the way under her own flag This advantage she shares with the British and the French in Africa and Southern Asia, and with the

Since this article (which is Chapter VIII of the author's unpublished book *Portuguese India*) was accepted we have heard with deep regret, of the death in action of Lt-Col John L. Christian

Russians who achieve the same result with their unbroken land mass from the Niemen to Vladivostock

One of the things that strikes a visitor to Portuguese India is the essential unity of Portugal and her colonies. The people of Panjim consider themselves Portuguese. Dhows from Daman, Diu and Goa take great pride in flying the Portuguese flag. Residents of the Portuguese East think of themselves as an integral part of Portugal, not as subject or colonial peoples. In Diu, Daman, and Goa I talked with civil and military officers who were born in these cities but had served in Portugal, Angola, Mozambique, Timor and Macau.

In Goa the Portuguese have achieved a welding of European and Eastern ways of life in a manner which tradition has considered impossible. I saw in Goa a unique unity of race and religion, with a degree of political contentment and an absence of class and racial distinctions which were quite unexpected by comparison with the remainder of India. In Daman I went with a party for a moonlight sail up the river. One of the most popular songs sung on the trip was a local composition in praise of Dr. Salazar and President Carmona. I heard the same song in various parts of Portuguese India sung by school children who were entirely Indian in race or whose slight admixture of continental Portuguese blood came to the East centuries ago.

Nor is Goa of interest and value to Portugal alone. Neutrals, like adversity, have their uses. The Swedish liner *Gripsholm* put into Mormugao Harbor in October, 1943, and the second lot of Americans evacuated from the Far East blessed a sanctuary provided by neutral Portugal. Lourenço Marques in Mozambique was used for the first exchange in Portuguese territory.

Axis shipping found the waters of Portuguese India equally useful. At the outbreak of war in Europe, three German merchant vessels and one Italian sought shelter in neutral Goa.

I saw the Hansa ships *Braunfels*, *Ehrenfels*, *Drachenfels*, and the Italian freighter *Anfora* resting on the

mud of Mormugao anchorage, their decks awash at high tide. These vessels were burned and scuttled by their crews in March, 1943, rather than risk running the gauntlet of British naval vessels waiting between India and South Africa. Their cargoes of motor cars, electrical goods, machinery, drugs, chemicals and manganese are collecting rust and mud while gulls perch on the rigging. One German vessel with its ribs broken was being battered beyond repair by the storms of the south west monsoon. The others appeared capable of salvage, and I saw a Portuguese naval engineer just out from home looking them over with an appraising eye. Crew members who were aboard when the ships were scuttled were interned by the authorities of Goa. Other members of the German and Italian crews were allowed the run of the place. In April, 1944, five German wives of Nazi diplomats in Japan and Nanking took up residence in the colony.

There are several ways of getting from New Delhi or Bombay down to Goa, and on to Ceylon. Except for air, I tried them all. The first day was spent in an air-conditioned coach of the Frontier Mail, its coolness made welcome by the heat already being felt in April from the edge of the Rajputana desert.

From Bombay I came south by coastal steamer to Ratnagiri, in order to see the place where Thebaw and Supayalat, last rulers of Burma, lived after they lost Mandalay in 1885. From Ratnagiri I went by bus to Kolhapur, and thence by train to Belgaum and Londa Junction. Here the West of India Portuguese Railway to Goa leaves the Indian railway system. In peace time there was a daily steamer service from Bombay to Goa. In addition, an excellent motor road leads down the ghats from Belgaum, and for those who travel down by air there is a good airfield on the promontory above Mormugao Harbor.

Londa Junction has only a small and crowded station, so I slept the night on the train scheduled to go down the hill to Goa the next morning. The little four wheeled first class compartment was quite com-

fortable, with the aid of an electric fan. We started at 6 o'clock in the morning, making the first stop at the British Indian frontier post at Castle Rock. Here my numerous letters and papers were judged satisfactory.

Down the Braganza ghat through sixteen tunnels, droves of monkeys, and a cloud of butterflies went the little train. Some of the tunnels were being relined by the "cement gun" process as we went through. About half way down the hill we stopped alongside the waterfall known as Dudh Sagur, "the ocean of milk." Water tumbled down in a thousand cascades, so close to the train that during the monsoon floods compartment windows must be closed to keep out the spray. The engine, almost literally, took a drink from the waterfall.

Next the train halted at Collem, the Portuguese customs station at the foot of the mountains that separate Portuguese from British India. Entering Portuguese territory was relatively simple. The courteous customs inspectors and the young and smartly dressed medical officer gave me the impression that they positively welcomed visitors—an impression not always received from similar officials in other countries. They passed my luggage without question. Thirsty passengers had their morning tea at the sign which said "Cha"—the word that stands for tea from Picadilly to Sydney. By this time we were down the hill, a glance backward revealed a charming panorama of the knife-like ridge of the Braganza ghat, which lower down was rounded and dimpled and covered with blue haze.

At Sanvordem station an improvised band warmed the home-coming of some local celebrity by playing "You Are My Sunshine." Once down on the coastal plain the train passed through an almost continuous coconut grove. We stopped a half hour at Margao, where most of the passengers for Panjim (Nova Goa) got down to proceed by bus or launch.

In a thousand wayside paddy-fields the soil was being harrowed and dry-planted to rice. I saw none being transplanted from nursery beds as is the custom

throughout most of Southern Asia. Wood ashes and leaves were used as fertilizers. We passed literally hundreds of wayside shrines and crosses, for the Goanese are very devout. In the villages and along the roads we saw an occasional padre wearing the black, broad brimmed baretta of the Continental priest.

On the average, I should say the houses were better than in adjacent British India. It may be more accurate to say merely that they were more westernized and therefore more like those on the distant hills of home. The white, pale blue, green, and yellow of Spain, Portugal and Algeria give an old world, continental aspect to Portuguese India. Bougainvillea, hybiscus, flame of the forest, mango, papaya, tamarind, jack fruit, coconuts, and cashew trees went by in almost endless succession. The train wound through drying copra and mountainous piles of coconut husks being prepared for coir, the fibre used throughout the Orient for making rope, matting, rugs, and even blankets. I rode in boats up to fifty feet in length made without a nail or screw, entirely fastened with coconut fibre.

We made a short stop at the new town of Vasco da Gama. With clean sands on each side of the narrow isthmus on which it is built, Vasco has almost a Miami Beach appearance.

Two miles beyond Vasco the meter gauge train came to the end of the line at Mormugao Harbor, the best port between Bombay and Cochin. Porters were on hand to carry luggage up to the Antigo Palacio—the "ancient palace", now converted into the best hotel for Europeans in Portuguese India. Here the food and service were excellent.

A slight stir in the air was noticeable as the steamer *Nyassa*, a Portuguese vessel coming out by way of Mozambique, was expected any day. Portuguese food and Portuguese nationals were on their way, new officials and new wine were being talked of with equal expectancy.

Except for the small fort at the crest of the promon-



tory directly above the ancient palace and a large stone cross said to have been erected by Vasco da Gama, Mormugao is modern. As nearly as I could learn, that navigator did not visit Goa on his first trip to India. There is a fair airfield on the low plateau just above the port.

But the real interest in Portuguese India lies in Panjim (Nova Goa) and in Old Goa. The latter, now almost deserted, lies some seven miles up the river from the modern town of Panjim. It is now most famous for its shrine of Saint Francis Xavier in the Jesuit church of the Bom Jesus.

Known throughout the sixteenth century world as Goa Dourada, the old city was first conquered by Alphonso d'Albuquerque who led twenty ships and 1200 men against its walls in 1510. Within twenty years "Golden Goa" is said to have had a population of 200,000 people.

I spent two hot April days roaming about the two or three square miles of the ruins of Old Goa. Today there are more coconut trees covering the site than when Camoens, author of Portugal's great epic poem, exclaimed, "What glorious palms on Goa's isle I see".

I carried a letter from Captain Joao Foyo Basto Folque, Governor of Daman, to his good friend the Superintendent of Customs, Goa. I found this gentleman, recently out from Lisbon, an ardent admirer of the beauty and history of Goa. He gave me the best summary of a newcomer's impression of Old Goa. "When we close our eyes we think these things were built by giants." And so it seemed.

Old Goa was for nearly 250 years (1510-1759) the capital of the Portuguese Asiatic and East African empire. Prior to 1530 Cochin was generally the capital. In 1759 the Viceroy, the Count of Ega, moved his residence to Nova Goa (Panjim) because repeated epidemics and ever-present malaria from adjacent marshes gave Old Goa an evil reputation. Officially, Panjim was declared the capital in 1843.

The luxury and opulence of Goa, the pride of its fidalgos, the charm and amours of its great ladies were

the subjects of long comments by travellers of the period. The streets of the old city bore alike the "elephants" of envoys from the Moguls, processions in an auto-da fe of the Inquisition, the slow tread of slaves (some of them Japanese) to the market, and the commerce of the Portuguese Orient. I paced out the banquet hall in the Palace of the Viceroys. It was more than 200 feet long and now overgrown with the engulfing jungle.

The best preserved buildings are the Church of the Bom Jesus, erected in 1594, and the Cathedral, which still is the Church of the Archbishop of Goa, Primate of the East. In the highest tower of the Cathedral hangs "the Golden Bell, one of the best in all of the world", as a small boy told me, to practise his English. It was cast in one of the villages of Goa and is said to weigh 4300 pounds. The Arch of the Viceroys, erected by the son of Vasco da Gama, is of special interest because by tradition a new Viceroy out from Lisbon did not assume office nor draw pay until he had passed through the Arch. The old convent of Santa Monica is notable for the massive flying buttresses which support its walls, and for its unique "baby turnstyle" by means of which a baby could be presented to the orphanage without the bearer or the nuns seeing each other. To test the device we used it to deliver our water bottle to the inside of the now deserted building. I found equally interesting the ruins of the Jesuit College of Saint Paul. Nearby is the chapel of the "College of the People", still beautiful in ruins and bearing the double headed eagle crest of the Augustinians. French and Dutch travellers reported 4000 students in these universities in the sixteenth century. Of the convent of St. Augustine, only the five storey façade now remains, although pictures taken in 1900 show most of the structure intact. Perhaps nothing will be left of this most striking ruin in Old Goa within another decade. Today even the ruins perish.

In some ways the war has brought evil days to Goa. According to the 1941 census the colony has nearly

700,000 people crowded into an area 62 miles long and nowhere more than 40 miles wide. Before the Japanese seized Burma, the world's richest ricebasket, much Rangoon rice came to Goa. Additional food was imported from India, but Hindustan now has none to spare. More than 75,000 men of Goa are working in India, on ships of the British merchant navy, and in places as far afield as Aden, East Africa, and the Persian Gulf ports. They are all loyal sons of Goa and their earnings help to keep Portuguese India in food. I saw no one hungry and no more than two or three beggars.

In the harbors of Mormugao, Panjim, and Vasco da Gama I saw nearly two hundred dhows from the far coasts of the Indian Ocean, and a few brigs from Jaffna, Ceylon. I talked in halting Hindustani with some of the grizzled old Moslem skippers from Karachi, the ports of Kathiawar, Cambay, Muscat, Bahrein, Mozambique, Zanzibar, and Basra. Wise in the ways of the sea, to me they seemed sixteenth century adventurers who somehow had managed to survive into the twentieth.

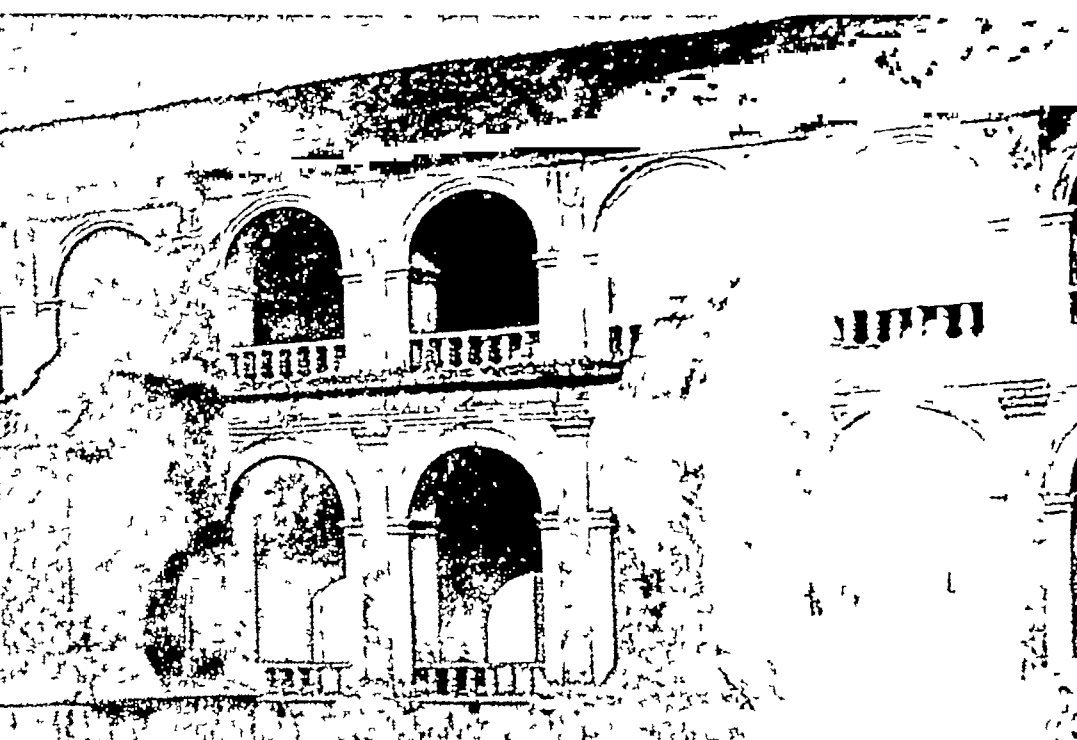
These sons of Sinbad utilize the monsoon winds to thread regular routes across the Arabian Sea. All sorts of craft and rigs may be seen in the harbors of Portuguese India and Malabar. Usually lanteen rigged, some of the vessels are three-masters, some have four masts.

Some of these ships have high, elaborately carved and painted sterns, copied from Portuguese galleons and carvels, or was it the other way around? I saw several vessels of 300 tons, whereas the *San Gabriel*, in which the great Vasco da Gama reached India, did not exceed 120 tons. Native vessels of this size are nothing new on the west coast of India, in 1500 the Portuguese found a 600 ton dhow carrying seven elephants from Ceylon to Cochin.

A list of Goa's stock in trade reads like a page from a Conrad novel—coconuts, copra, spices, fish, cashew nuts, teak, arrack, salt, mangosteens.



*Le Lord Le Bouguier*

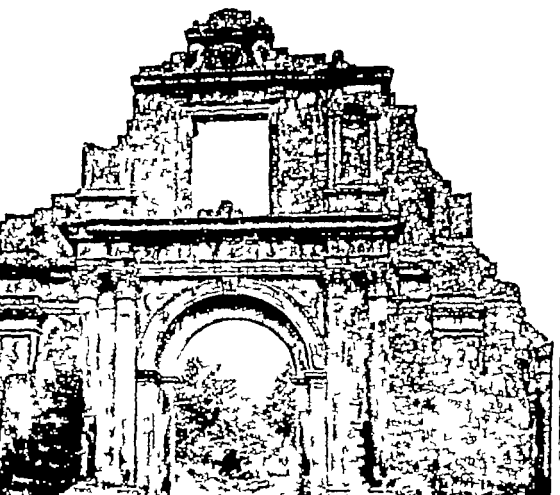
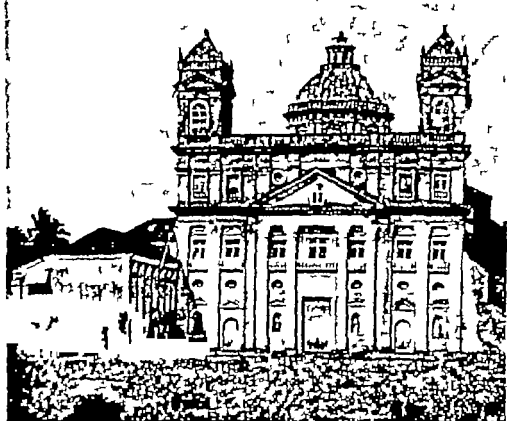


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THE AUTHOR SITTING ON AN OLD ANCHOR

Copra, coconut oil, coir, spices, and curry stuffs were the principal cargo being loaded for East Africa and the head of the Arabian Sea. Due to the shortage of coastal steamers dhows are carrying a large share of the normal coasting trade along the western shores of India.

Thinking that an approach to Calicut in a vessel similar to the great da Gama's *San Gabriel* would be something to write home about, I tried to find passage on a dhow from Daman to Goa, from Ratnagiri to Goa, and again from Goa to Karwar, Mangalore and Calicut. But already the swells and squalls of the approaching south west monsoon were beginning to roll in. Sailings were uncertain, and the old Arabs looked with a jaundiced eye at my proposals. There were no takers.

Colonel Jose Ricardo Pereira Cabral, Governor General of the Portuguese "State of India" has his offices and secretariat in the old palace of Adil Shah, the Moslem Sultan of Bijapur from whom Albuquerque wrested Goa in 1510. I was shown the Council Room, a stately hall with a large ante-room adjoining which are the State Archives. The walls of the Council Room and the ante room are adorned with oil paintings of all the Viceroys and Governors of Portuguese India from 1500 to the present. The long bearded Alphonso d'Albuquerque was given pride of place, in the center directly behind the seat of the Governor. He was flanked by Dom Joao de Castro, who defended Diu in 1547, and by Dom Nunha da Cunha, who acquired Daman in 1591. These, with St. Francis Xavier and Vasco da Gama, are the heroes of Portuguese India.

I went out for a look at the Governor General's palace at Cabo, the tip of the peninsula that separates Panjim from Mormugao. A more delightful spot would be difficult to find. It occupies part of the site of an old Franciscan convent, the principal chapel of which has been beautifully restored as a place of worship for the Governor and his household. The grounds are exposed to ocean breezes on three sides, and the cashew grows wild over the peninsula beyond the gardens.



Just outside the Governor General's grounds is the well-kept English cemetery, first used when British troops, as I have said, garrisoned Goa for a time (1794-1815) during the Napoleonic wars. I saw markers for two Americans, one a Yankee sea captain who died off Goa a century ago, the other a fellow-countryman who got no farther when the exchange ship *Gripsholm* visited Goa in October 1943.

On my first visit to Panjim I paid a courtesy visit to Major M O A Baig, H B.M.'s Consul in Portuguese India. He and his charming wife invited me to stay at the Consulate. This I was happy to do as it saved the daily round trip from Mormugao to Panjim by the Dona Paula ferry.

Anglo-Portuguese friendship is based upon port wine and the oldest valid treaty in the world, the Treaty of Windsor, May 9, 1386. Many examples of this long association were evident. The Portuguese, however, have not adopted Indian war time, and are thus an hour behind Bombay. The Keeper of the Archives explained it to me this way. "We don't follow Churchill time here".

But I found the Imprensa Nacional hard at work binding the last copies of a life of Winston Churchill in Portuguese. A copy had been sent to the Prime Minister, and the arrival of a cable of thanks from the Rt Hon Winston Churchill caused quite a flutter in the office of Campos Lobo, the young and capable director of the National Press.

I found the same generally pro-British attitude common throughout the several units of Portuguese India. Each Allied success seemed to increase this sentiment, which approved the grant to Britain of bases and other facilities in the Azores. The Portuguese were, however, careful to point out that their Indian holdings are those of a sovereign, independent, and neutral power where their own national interests are paramount. I respected their sensibilities and appeared in Goa in civilian clothes, although I wore uniform in Daman and Diu. There has been some expression of

desire for union with British India, but this movement has never been strong and has been confined to a few Christian Goanese who have close family or economic ties with their great neighbor

Except for the fact that motor cars, picture magazines, and movies come from America, no one seemed greatly interested in the United States. In fact, I have never before been in a place where New York seemed so far away. I was several times told that America is the principal market for cashew nuts, and that a famous missionary surgeon at nearby Miraj is an American. One evening we had a pleasant dinner at the Consulate with the Director and Assistant Director of the Portuguese health services in India as guests. The Director and his wife, who had just sent their son away to a technical school in Massachusetts, asked many questions about university life in the States.

Panjim, or Nova Goa, is the cultural and administrative center of Portuguese India. The town, which has a population of more than 20,000 has a rather pleasant continental aspect. Several broad tree shaded streets have been laid out. These are paved, electric lighted, and are cleaner than is the rule in India. The Altinho, the "Malabar Hill" of Goa, is the residential district of the leading citizens of the town, with cool breezes and an excellent view over the river and harbor. Under a masonry canopy in the center of the town there is a statue of Vasco da Gama, which stood originally in Old Goa. Down the river along the sands where the townspeople stroll in the cool of the evening a beautiful modernistic statue of Albuquerque was erected in 1935. On the pediment there is a map illustrating the voyages and conquests of the Great Captain.

The old barracks square, the largest building in Goa, is now being put to practical use housing the Imprensa Nacional, the Bibliotheca Nacional, the police quarters and a small jail (where I saw a tall, blond deserter from an English county regiment who was making an unsuccessful effort to prove that he was from Texas), the

library, museiu, and art collection of the Institute de Vasco da Gama, a research and cultural center.

Finally the time came when I must leave the charming country which Sir Richard Burton called "the land of blue mountains". The driver of the first bus that took me south along the coast to the frontier of British India said, somewhat hopefully, "Sir, in this bus you will go very joyfully". Four changes of bus were necessary due to lack of bridges and vehicular ferries across the rivers and tidal estuaries

The bus which finally took me out of Portuguese India had the appropriate name "Forget-Me-Not" painted on the hood. I had sent a note ahead to the owner reserving the front seat for the early morning trip. The reply came back, "Respected Sir, as per your orders we are arranging accordingly". And so it turned out to be. At every stop the big question was, "Can we take another passenger aboard?" The protesting mutter of the motor gave "No" as the answer.

Eventually (the distance was less than 50 miles) we reached the British frontier. Getting back into India was something of a problem. Here all passports, documents, letters of introduction and identification, and official orders were called into play. In due course, such questions as "Are you German sailor from Goa? Are you American?" were answered to the satisfaction of the Indian guards, and we were allowed to proceed.

Karwar, at the head of an idyllic little bay, was the first town of consequence across the Indian frontier. As a young man Rabindranath Tagore, India's great poet, once visited his brother who was the District Judge of Karwar. Many years later the poet said it was the beauty of Karwar's sweeping sand beaches bordered with coconut and casuarina trees and studded with islands that first aroused in him the muse of poetry. To see Karwar is to believe Tagore.

Thanks to the foresight of Mr Thomas R D Bell, a retired British forest officer with a perfect George Bernard Shaw beard and salty Shavian manners who

came to Karwar in November 1884 and who now lives in retirement on a bluff above the beach, the cutting of firewood within five miles of the municipal limits was prohibited. As a result Karwar is said to be the only place on the west coast of India from the Gulf of Cambay to Cape Comorin where the forest primeval runs down to the sea. I left Bell finishing off his breakfast with toast and marmalade out under his beloved trees while taking aim with a sling shot at some venturesome monkeys.

Five miles by sea from Karwar, beyond Ladies Bay and a rocky headland, lies Anjidiv Island, southernmost Portuguese possession in India. Anjidiv is of much interest as the first land taken possession of by the Portuguese in India. I persuaded a fisherman to take me out in his outrigger sailing canoe. The island is less than two miles long with an area of about one square mile. There I found two small beaches, neither more than 200 feet long, where Vasco da Gama in November 1498 and again in his second expedition of 1502, scraped barnacles and refitted his tiny ships. I found it difficult to realize that the rocky, barren island was for some time the seat of Dom Francisco de Almeida, first Viceroy of the Indies, who was here attacked by 60 Moorish ships. It was home for a time to Stephen and Francisco da Gama, son and great-grandson respectively of the famed Vasco. Here also Cabral overhauled his vessels after discovering Brazil on his voyage to India—except for one ship which returned from the Arabian Gulf direct to Portugal with only six men aboard, the remainder having died of disease and starvation.

More recently it was used as a penal colony. I found there the native representative of the Goa government, his wife, seven men, and eight cattle. I walked around the island and had a look at the fortifications erected by the da Gamas. The ruined walls with rusting iron cannon, their muzzles still frowning out to sea over low ramparts, were last repaired by the Viceroy Francis de Taura in 1682. The ruins of a solidly built stone

house were pointed out as the residence of Vasco and Francisco da Gama. A few coconut, jack, cashew, and mango trees, two wells of good water, and two substantial brick quarters are all that remain. In addition there are the ruins of two Chapels, one of which has a ceiling beam with the date 1707 carved on its face

British troops were stationed on Anjdiv for a time while waiting to take over Bombay Island when it passed to Charles II along with the hand of Catherine of Braganza in 1665

It is an ancient island and is believed to have been known to the Greeks as Leuke, although some scholars think this word is a corruption of Lanka, the native name for Ceylon. It was visited by Ibn Batuta, the Moslem adventurer who visited much of the Orient before the Europeans. Cabral, de Almeida, Joao da Nova, da Gama, Albuquerque, the Admiral Soares, and most of the other Portuguese worthies of the time visited it or made it their base for operations in the Indian Ocean. Now little remains of its former greatness. Its terraced fields show that at one time nearly the entire stony island was under cultivation

*R. C. Ormerod*

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## *LETTERS FROM OVERSEAS*

### *NO. IV—THE HILLS*

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**A** RARE COUNTRY with hills of shifting colour  
 That fills the eye to every expanse of view,  
 Mounting range of saddle and crest whence spills  
 Sandy water in rivulets, whirls and rills  
 Down to the plain  
 Here are cross and chequer of paddy-fields  
 And rivers winding deep in their green banks,  
 Where among shrub and garden effortlessly

Villages stretch that seem unending The mud  
And thatch and beams of teak rise easily  
In a rich countryside away from the world,  
Hidden in deep mountains Here is summer  
Eternal striving through frost of winter and rains  
And a thick haze of fertility All year is green  
And flower and insect vie in colour, nor has been  
The drought and thirst of India among these hills

In pools and ditches beside the track there grows  
A plant that roots in water on bladders buoyed  
With lilac spike of flowers in April, and throws,  
Sweeping with life the void  
Lilac and green profusion and brilliance unalloyed

Strange to come with our tanks and guns and the toys  
Of global war among these hills, by a tarmac road  
Winding above gorges into the plain,  
To pitch out tents beside the bashas and feed  
On food from tins, to see  
Trucks with arms and petrol and transport planes  
Taxing loudly down the metalled strip  
We built up messes, repaired the tracks and stayed  
Doing odd jobs and passing papers, and played  
At being soldiers, the same as ever before,  
And fought the fierce battles of our training war  
But the remoteness fell on us among the shy  
Half-Mongol villagers with a new speech clustering  
In the bazaars, a medley of turban and sarong,  
Or watching singly from the basha verandah,  
Smiling not so ingenuous folk with a country wisdom,  
Close to an ancient world of colour and song  
Far from alarms far from the dearth and desert  
Of India stretched in peace and hunger, far from the  
ease

And lights of city and cinema, there far ahead  
Were names, Tamu and Tiddim, reports of skirmish  
And the unmeasured length of our pledge in Burma,  
Behind, India and tired Europe and wireless news

The paddy stalks were brown and the torrents dry,  
 Nights slowly warming and mosquitoes hatched,  
 The hills were brown and olive, the sky clear  
 With only a loose white wisp adrift in the blue  
 And the heat of day increased. So it was,  
 An easy approach to warmth and season of rain  
 When from the hills and forest to flank and rear  
 Came in strength the resolute horde of Japs.

The brave, barbarous, adolescent Jap in his legions,  
 Flushed with the loot and triumph of Singapore,  
 Delhi the admitted goal With him came  
 The constant round of ambush and quick encounter,  
 Grenades on the perimeter, then impatient days of  
 waiting,  
 And nights. Have you knelt alone in a trench  
 Longing for the dawn, a tommygun at your side  
 And grenades, half nodding, then awake with a start  
 Of imagination as a tree shakes in the wind  
 Or a cricket springs? Was that a sound?  
 Only frogs in the ditch A sudden flashlight?  
 A firefly Then only silence, waiting for the crack of  
 gunfire  
 Or nerves, praying for a moon Often in rain  
 Blinding, drowning the sound of feet Often in quiet  
 Resounding, till a sudden crash and machine-guns  
 Open and tracer and parachute-flares light up

Day brings the certainty of enterprise and attack,  
 The rationed barrage and spectacular air-strike,  
 Followed by the patient infantry; the attack,  
 Counter-attack and retreat or consolidation,  
 The repeated tale So with the mounting weeks  
 Familiar and unmemorable, till we knew the fall of a  
 shell  
 And the stink of torn flesh intimately in these  
 mountains.

There is a Naga village  
 On a low spur half way up one of the hills

Beside the plain, that menaced the brigade position,  
Beneath it a river and bog and sheer slopes  
There were patrols for reconnaissance and at dawn  
Artillery strikes, then up a Company climbed  
With bren, mortar and stretchers They killed  
Some dozen, left a bit fewer dead  
And brought back more on stretchers The appreciation  
Faulty Too strong, the place still held  
Ready for the next encounter Nothing achieved  
But scope for unseen courage and the doctor's skill  
Next night and day the same battle went on

The paddy shot with mines and the bamboo spikes  
Were sharp with sniper bullets, the hills  
Were only gun positions and the running streams  
Obstacles And as the rain came on  
With floods from the hills, the tracks melted in mud  
That still must carry supplies Though guns still  
fired,  
The trenches filled And fighting went on continually

All should bring certainty to the doubting mind,  
Realization of brutality or else  
The horror of man-killed man and renunciation  
For the tints of the countryside turned white and black  
Shall we remember facts of Manilla and Malay?  
Need we—who have seen, ourselves,  
A gray haired Indian cook, non-combatant, lying  
askew, his eyes thumbed out? Shall we remember  
The screams after our shots and starved prisoners  
With empty eyes? When the twisting cyclone of war  
Has swept across these hills with its coiled destruction  
And the air is cleared, better to reflect as soldiers  
That Japs are only beasts and a pleasure to kill

The air is clear again, but the mountain road  
Leads, a bright red streak through the green grasses,  
To Burma And thence whither? Siam, Malay,



China, and at last Tokyo. But is that the end?  
Or thence to London again? So say the signposts  
Is that our end, a return to normal? We think  
Awaiting rations much about shops and homes,  
Little of the words of statesmen. Our pay today  
And home tomorrow till a war twenty years hence  
And what have we done here? If we have fought like  
men,

The hills remember dimly as battles past.  
Here wars have come before, but the grass grows  
Quick bamboo in the gun-pits, grass in the trenches  
Shoots, the hillside red with digging  
Resumes its greenery. The native village  
Blasted hours long by full divisional guns,  
Once only stink and mud, torn branches and flooded  
holes,

After two weeks was green and the villagers  
Returning at once set to and rebuilt their huts  
Sometime a villager foraging far afield  
Away from tracks in jungle by the river bank  
Or on a lonely spur may find suddenly  
Deep in thickets and elephant-grass concealed  
The rust and buckled armour of a broken tank  
Yes, we have knocked out crack divisions, prepared  
the way

For a great advance to victory. Our troubles  
Are after all acknowledged in the Indian press,  
Our lack of Ensa and entertainment  
Appreciated, our claims for repatriation  
Under consideration;  
We are not the forgotten army we thought we were—  
Not to eyes turned east to a great retreat  
Do you know Kabaw, a valley of death, trees  
And jungle and creepers, elephant-grass and roots  
Unintermittent, and only a broken track  
Of dust, mud in a shower? We found  
Trucks axle-deep, men dead of sickness and hunger.  
You know the army  
Fought for its life in a small circuit of hills.

Whatever achieved, there's lost  
Something of our lives, months of a youth forgone  
In a small circuit of hills We know  
The dead boy lying in the grass, the empty place in  
the mess,  
Bear on our bodies scars, in our minds a vacancy,  
The pity of it all And now waiting  
Day and day, week and week, month and month,  
An eye forward, an eye far to our homes,  
What can we find as hills turn emerald to green,  
Green to olive and rains decline in a sky  
Cloudless with temperate sun and colding stars?  
Only a desert among fertility, a blight  
Over the sprouting rice, our labour barren

So wars have been before,  
We know, and there's nothing new,  
At all, under the sun Our fathers lay  
In mud and bog of Flanders, now our brothers  
Must lie again by broken dykes in Holland,  
Seven armies forcing the German wall  
We with our rationed arms,  
Two Corps in a small circuit of hills  
Held up at stream and village, still can know  
Our struggle only a part, yet a microcosm  
In all its parts, an orrery of greater wars

And all to the same end, through the same mud  
And dust, with the same evasion and fear  
And the same devotion, fighting for the same suffering  
That made the war, with the same uncertain ideals—  
And with the same effect? We talk and plan  
And hope Hope springs eternal Safe for democracy  
Homes Security By catchwords we seek eternity,  
Striving yet  
For a slight glimpse of reality, what can be borne  
By our uncertain hopes, forgetting  
Our greatest struggles only a minor gearing  
Of some machinery worked from above the stars

Only a pattern  
That some call fate and some materialism  
Or just the way things go, whereunder men must strive  
To force their will into a causal world,  
Hoping at times, then doubting, fighting still,  
Still doubting, knowing some power  
Guides the result, not theirs. Our hopes diverse and  
multiple,  
Equal our fears, many as men that fight.  
Here in the hills  
One fights for home, one on a lone lost impulse,  
One for a great ideal and one for pay,  
All fight the same. Why is it that men fight  
Save that they must, not to forget their nature?

Now hills again are graying after monsoon's ending,  
Peasants return to villages and fields,  
Now rice in brown and gold a harvest yields  
Onward tending  
The year to frost and sowing-time In foreign fields  
No nearer home, with hopes yet unfulfilled  
Idle spectators of the pantomime  
We water the acres tilled  
Even as before they saw battalions killed

What stands  
Save only mute reflection, sharp remembrance  
As of one scene before the shutter falls  
In white magnesium light, what stands in recollection?  
Not the disdaining hills They too will fall  
When earth contracts in wrinkles Not the streams  
And bird-calls from the forest and bright wings  
Or deep unshapen jungle covering all  
Time passes, yet a scene surpasses time,  
And action more than vision is sublime  
So at the height of rains I saw  
At Bishenpur where the Silchar track comes down  
From green and forest-covered hills into  
The plain beside the lake The road was mud

And trucks slid among ruts Back down the road  
There came a British Company cut off  
A week among the hills, shelled often  
And jittered, muddy and unshaved, some limping,  
All with their rifle slung and loaded pack  
For a brief rest before the next attack

*Palel Kalewa*

*September 1944—January 1945*

*A H Simpson*

*“ AND WE THE PLAYERS ”*

THE YELLOW glow from the street lamp hung there in the darkness, dripping pearls of water onto the wet pavement, where they shattered into a miniature shower of stars, then joined the mud drifting in the gutter

The youth stared at the pool of light, as he shivered by the dark warehouse doors, and the water dripped and dripped. It was nothing new to him, he had often stood here when he was waiting for his mother to come up from the pub. That was when he was a kid. Sometimes when he had waited in the rain and the street had been very quiet, he had held his hand under the drips from the lamp and imagined they were pearls. His father had often told him about pearls. He was a seaman, and as the water had splashed down, his hands had caught the drops as they shattered, and they had grown and grown into a pool in his palms, till he could see the golden reflection from the lamp, just like a huge gold nugget set in the middle of a bed of gems, but the water always ran out between his fingers, then the nugget disappeared.

He grinned as his eyes still stared transfixed at the life in the glittering drops. He was a seaman himself

now, even if only of a year's standing, but it was war now. The merchant navy made a difference to a chap in a year; he grew up quick, and was a man at nineteen.

His thoughts broke for a moment as footsteps came heavily along the wet street. Yes, it might be him. The dim light from a street lamp was reflecting on some thing that might be the old peak cap he knew so well. He waited till it came nearer. Yes, it was. It was the old man, but with a difference, not the one from the scow of a ship that he sailed in, not the one who shut himself away with his fine drinks, no, this was his own old man, the one who had kicked him out of the house when he was a kid and had come home full of beer, liquor and fire—full of beer, liquor and fire till his boat had sailed again.

The youth stepped out from the doorway. He did not feel so cold now, but he still trembled a little, and the smile that tugged at the corners of his mouth felt much stronger and more powerful than his knees. This was his first leave, the first time he had seen his father since he had joined his ship. He was almost under the lamp now, and he had seen him. His hand was outstretched, and his beard parted in the middle just under his nose. They grasped hands. He was still strong, the old man, and he could feel the hard pressure on his knuckles. It hurt a bit.

"Well! Well! Well!" he was saying, and his stained teeth showed through the hair of his face. Then he was saying a lot more things. "Seeing life . . . you're a man now . . . wish I was still . . .," and then they were walking down the dark street. His father's head was held up and he walked with a determined tread, while the walls stared blankly on and the mud trickled musically down the gratings in the gutter. The blackness was splashed with light as they approached the end of the street, and beyond they could see the ships lying at their quays and wharves like sleeping cattle, while lights bobbed up and down on the water, moving in and out of the silent hulks. The old man sighed. "There they are, son, sleeping there. See them?"

Live things, they breathe and laugh, and they cry They can give you life and they can take it away, but you've got to understand them " He spat in the gutter, then sighed again "They've got tempers too, some of them, some good and some bad like women ~ but they can be tamed, like your mother She was bad, but I tamed her too, may she rest in peace "

They turned the corner from the street and crossed the railway lines to the quayside, the twin threads of silver running away in the distance to be joined by others The water smelt strong from here, and the youth's father breathed deeply "Smell it, son It's good, isn't it? That's the world you're breathing in, your new world, and the clatter of the anchor chain is your new language " The youth grinned in the darkness This was the old man all over It used to be action once, when he explained anything, with the buckle of his belt Now it was talk

A blue light on the quayside came into sight It was spattered with red, and chinks of yellow showed underneath which changed into an oblong as the door opened, silhouetting the figure of a man for a moment, and the oblong narrowed into a slit and disappeared again, leaving the chinks staring unblinking across the wharf This would be the "Seven Stars", thought the youth again How many times as a kid had he come down here at his father's command to bring back a bottle, because the old man was too drunk to come down himself, then when he had dawdled too long watching the tugs, he had got the belt buckle across his backside when he got back He grinned at his thoughts and stepped up the worn sandstone step to the pub door The big brass knob glinted and he could feel the holes worn in the smooth surface by countless hands and vigorous polishing They stepped inside, the door slamming behind them making the windows rattle in their frames Over the top of the low wooden partition everything was a haze of tobacco and cigarette smoke It smelt strong, mingled with the smell of newly drawn beer, especially after the earthy smell of the late rain outside

Behind the bar a woman who looked to be in her fifties rubbed a grimy cloth quickly round the insides of shiny beer glasses while her mouth talked and made shapes resembling smiles, artificial smiles, painted on with the brush of experience, and she just chattered and laughed, chattered and laughed, an actress whose lines were as much a part of her as her name " 'Evening, Meg,' " grunted the old man, as he and the boy walked over the floor, with nods of recognition here and there, into the blue haze "Two pints, and stick them up as usual " He laughed through his beard, leaning heavily on the bar, then turned to his son "You know Meg, do you?" he asked and went straight on "Fine gel, Meg, I remember her when she was about so high " He indicated a height about two feet from the sawdust on the floor with his hand, then spat as though noticing the sawdust for the first time "We were both kids then, and knew every stinking barrel and corner on the wharf " He laughed, fumbling in his pocket amongst jingling coins, as the woman clumped two thick glasses of foaming beer onto the bar top "See," he exclaimed, passing coins into the wet hand, "see that froth, the life in it, bubbling sparkling life?" He paused "That's why Meg and I never got anywhere I wanted life, and life," he reflected, picking up the glass and staring at the amber light shining from it. His son muttered and lifted the beer to his lips, leaving a line of fine bubbles across his upper lip Then the old man continued "That's why she wouldn't marry me I was twenty then and she was fifteen But I like my beer and I like life, so I went to sea to look for it " He took a deep draught of the brown liquid, wiping the back of his hand across his mouth where the beer still clung to the hairs "What life had I known?" he added rather bitterly. "Dirty filthy streets and docksides, till those sleeping scows out there moored up, offered me that something that I never knew, and I took it But where has it got me?" He laughed again "Nowhere And they didn't show me life either The boys on the 'Rosy

Jones' used to call me a bastard and I was " He spat on the floor again "Then I married your mother, a bitch *she* was too But I didn't see a lot of her, only when we were in port, and I spent most of my time up here Meg'll tell you that, but even *she* didn't show me life, even if she learnt me a lot of other things " He gave a suggestive chuckle and drained his glass, putting it up for refilling

From across the room somewhere amongst the haze, a harpy piano came wearily to life, the atmosphere almost choking the tattered remnants of vitality still left in the twanging wires "Come on over to the 'joanna' when you get your beer, son " The old fellow grunted, holding his beer to the light "Hell! Gets more like ruddy urine every day," he snorted, then turned towards the figures at the piano "This is Flint Williams, my old mate " he said, pointing "I don't think you remember *him* any more than he remembers *you* The only people who remember Flint are what's left of the old crew!" He laughed meaningly, slapping the tall thin man on the shoulders "That's right, Flint isn't it?" he asked looking into the pale blue eyes

The man chuckled good humouredly, and nodded to the youth, while the old man lifted his beard out of the way of his glass and buried his nose in the froth "You'll be Stevie, I suppose?" asked Flint "I remember you coming for your dad here when you were a youngster " The beer in the old man's glass spluttered as he clumped the glass down onto the table "Now look here Flint," he menaced jokingly "don't you go letting Stevie here think his old man could never get himself home If they came down for me, it wasn't because I wanted them to Or needed them to " he added chuckling again into his glass as he drained it "And I suppose the missus regretted it every time she got me home, and wished she'd left me to go into the dock " He laughed at his own joke and ordered more beer "Come on, lad, cheer up, don't sit there as if you're not with us!" He almost shouted



at his son, who eased himself on his stool, and lifted his beer to his mouth. "I was just thinking," he smiled, "who was the worst on the 'Rosy Jones'—you or Mr Flint here?" "Ho! Ho!" roared the old man. "That's a good one. Mi. Flint indeed! The boys would like that!" He waved his palm at Flint. "Just look at him. See the pointed nose and thin lips, and the cold eyes? Well his heart was just the same once, cold and hard, cold and hard, just like a stone. or . . . or a flint, that's it! A flint, Mr Flint indeed!" He turned to the pianist who was peering intently through thick-rimmed spectacles at the yellow keys as though he could read the music in his fingers. "Hey! Snowy! Come on, wake up, let's have some ruddy life from that hulk of a 'joanna'! Or else get up and let a *real* pianist sit down!" He laughed out loud again and shuffled his stool back, to get up from the table. "I'm going to see a man about a dog, and I expect to hear something a bit hotter when I get back!" He raised his eye-brows, "By hot," he added, brushing the back of his hand across his beard, "I mean something Meg can sing!" And he closed one eye, the bushy eye-brow coming down to kiss his cheek as he turned and wove his way between the beer-soaked tables.

The thin-faced man with the blue eyes leaned over the table, and shook his head. "He never changes much, your old man," he said with a sound almost like a sigh. "God, he used to be a stinker before he had to retire, the boys hated his guts. And they hated mine too, and then for that I hated the old man. It was a vicious circle." The man leaned back again on his stool and offered the youth a cigarette. "I'll tell you one thing, lad, never devote your time looking for life, because if you do, you'll never find it. Just learn to accept it and in the end you'll find you've been living amongst it all the time, and you never knew it." He struck a match and reached it across to the dangling cigarette.

"Did your old man ever tell you about when he

pushed me down the hold?" he asked with a trace of emotion in his voice, but the youth shook his head. "No, I didn't suppose for a moment he would, but see this." He opened his shirt neck to reveal a scar running across his shoulder. "Your old man did that. The boys called him Sprag in those days, Sprag Morley, because he was always tripping them up over something." He smiled. "And they called him other things too, that's where I got my name—Flint! I was first mate, and the old man's doings used to often react on to me from the men, that's why I got myself a bad name, and a year under him made me hate the very rivets 'Rosy Jones' was held together with, let alone her crew."

He looked across the bar, blowing a cloud of smoke down his nose, 'Your dad's at the bar now, talking to that bitch behind the counter.' He always had a soft spot for her, you know. That might have been the root of the trouble between us. She never wanted him, and when the old man saw her with me one night, well he just went queer, and never had a civil word for anybody. Used to be drunk every night, and every port we were in we would have to send a party out for him. More often than not we'd find him in a brothel, drunk as hell!"

A steward with a greasy waistcoat and dirty apron pushed a swimming tray of beer glasses on the table. "From old man Morley," he grunted, then swept away with a jangle of glass.

Flint and the youth looked at one another. "Well! getting generous these days," smiled Flint, lifting his glass. He paused, his mouth tilting in a lop-sided smile. "Or getting well sluiced with that rat poison she's handing out."

The young sailor grinned, looking at the cracked paint on the table top. "How is it that you and my old man are so friendly now, then?" he asked, his eyes puckering at the corners, "after you were such enemies before."

The other didn't answer for a few moments, he

looked puzzled. "I don't know," he finally admitted, then leaned forward on the table, rocking the glasses and slopping the beer over the sides. He looked intently at his companion. "You're young yet," he said, his fingers abstractedly playing with a used matchstick, "but some day you might have the same experience as I had." The matchstick broke in his finger as he went on. "That night when I went into the hold might have been the last time a noggin of rum would ever burn its way down my throat. You see," he went on, "I hung upside down for nigh on a quarter of an hour. . . quarter of an hour, in which I remember every ruddy prayer a ship's prayer book could learn me. Mind you," he emphasized, "I'm not saying your old man pushed me in on purpose, but he was drunk, as you well might guess, and he had a nark over that that thing serving the drinks, then somehow he'd pushed me, and I was over the top. Hell! It seemed like a mile I'd dropped before I found I was hanging with one foot round the cross beam." The cigarette stub in his fingers dropped hissing on to the wet table, then he carried on, the youth listening with more interest.

"At the time we'd been running a cargo of scrap, and all that was left in the hold was about ten tons of broken odds and ends in the bottom. I didn't see it like that, though. No, by Hell! To me it was a wooden box, with shining handles on the side, and a lid ready to be nailed on." His eyes had narrowed slightly now, with the intensity of his emotion. "Then your old man, Sprag, leaned over. I didn't hate him then, and I can honestly say, son, though I've never seen an angel, he was the nearest to my imagination of one. After that, I've a vague memory of ropes and things, but I flaked out after that, and I'm here now, but strangely enough," he paused and looked at his finger nails, then at the youth, "strangely enough, after that, I've found things different, things like like well, everything, the docks don't stink so much the sun seems brighter down the wharves

even the beer tastes good, and then above all I don't want a toy like Meg there to break the monotony "

He drew slowly at his cigarette "I found what your old man never found I found that I was alive " The glasses rocked again as he leaned back from the table and sighed "Yes, son, I like this little pub I can put up with Meg's all night dribbling, I don't even mind your old man's boozy ways now "

They were interrupted as the youth's father came up He was almost staggering now, his face round and bright like a full moon "I've just been telling Meg some of the old tales," he drooled, "and do you know what she says, eh?" He lurched his big figure into the empty seat with a grunt "'You get *worse* and *worse* and *worse*, Sprag Morley,' she said The bitch! Worse, mind you!" He hiccupped, then burst out laughing, his stomach heaving "As though I could, she's a careful piece, she is and do you know what else she said?" He sobered up for a moment and looked surprised "She said I'll come to a sticky end one of these days " He rocked in his seat, swilling the beer again on the table "She says they've brought the old 'Rosy Jones' up to the wharf for breaking up The 'Rosy Jones' of all scows," he hiccupped again "And I'm going down to see her too, to-night!" A jet of spittle came from his mouth, directed at the square pattern in the oil-cloth on the floor "You see that?" he growled "That's what I'm going to do to 'Rosy', spit on her Yes, by Hell! if it s the last thing I ever do, I'm going to spit on her right from the bridge "

It was still raining slightly as the three figures picked their way amongst the crates and rusting winches on the wharf side It was very quiet except for the mixture of laughs and curses from the older man and the rain pattered hollow on the empty rotting packing cases Everything seemed so oblivious to the intruders, although somewhere a corrugated sheet creaked and gave a weak rattle, even though there was no apparent breeze

"Why the hell you have come down here, a night like this, just to see a rusting hulk, God alone knows," grumbled Flint, pulling his coat collar round his face. "If you weren't so ruddy sozzled, you would have had to come on your own, because you wouldn't catch me out here trying to keep my feet on a lot of rotten timbers. No sir!" he finished, giving his collar another jerk.

"Oh! You      You blokes are all alike, when you get your anchors on to a pension, you blabber and blubber about gardens and cottages, as though you'd never tasted the weather," drawled Morley in a lazy, almost hopeless fashion. "And you gabble about getting a woman and settling down with kids and things, as though you were such ruddy angels, and never slept with a woman in your ruddy lives." He laughed, a short sarcastic laugh. "But Stevie'll see life all right, won't you, son?" he added, turning to pat the young sailor on the back. "You know what they say, son, don't you?" he leered as he stumbled along. "All the world's a stage and we're the players." He paused and hiccupped, "And a ruddy fine player I've been too. They haven't put the curtain up on my ruddy stage." He slapped his knee and started to laugh again.

The outline of a ship's funnel and stern showed through the darkness and the rain, inclined towards the wharf like some weary imagined monster, leaning, as though another foot and it would be leaning on the timbers of the wharf.

"There she is! The scow!" spat the old man. "I'd recognize her anywhere and she is drunk as well. That makes two of us, but only one of us is going to act this time. I'm going to smash everything on her," he spat venomously. "I wish I had a charge of dynamite, and I'd blow her blasted plates in. See this wharf? Well, this is the stage and 'Rosy Jones' is going to be the audience. I'm going to enjoy this," he babbled, tugging his arm free from the tall Flint, who grinned and made a grab for it again.

"Come on! Come on! Sprag!" he chuckled "You said you wanted to spit on her, that's all, didn't you? Well, there she is Give her a good mouthful and let's get home "

Morley still pulled at his arm in his drunken desire "I tell you I've waited for this," he almost snarled, "and you aren't going to stop me, if I can help it, or you Stevie!" he finished, glaring across at his son, and his son grasped his other arm "Flint's right," he grinned "Let's get back, I'm not particularly interested in her, anyhow " Then he felt a strange twinge of fear just like he used to get, when his father used to come home, before he left the sea

It must have been seeing the 'Rosy Jones' and him together It made him think of the times when his mother used to cry, and he used to keep out of the way himself as long as he could, till his father had gone away again He glanced across the water where the rain made the reflecting lights shiver and dance, while the solitary hulk of the 'Rosy Jones' at the old wharf looked lonely and remote, and even sad—something that had once lived but was now swept by time from the bustle of life into the backwaters, to rust and spend the last few days in solitude

As the youth looked at the hulk, he saw her momentarily with her funnel belching smoke, her brass work shining and her bows lifting to the tide, with life pulsating through her metal sides His father was standing there too, giving drunken orders, shouting and hanging to the rail, his face red and round, curses and foul language dripping from his lips Then there was somebody else—it looked like Mr Flint, he was standing on the gang plank and he was shouting too, but something was wrong with the picture It was the gang plank It shouldn't be down, not if she was sailing anyhow

The picture melted, and the shining brass disappeared, the same as the smoke and the thumping engines, and the rust came back and the rain, but something was still wrong His father was there on

the deck shouting, and Mr Flint was still on the gang-plank. The youth started and swung round. It was real. It wasn't imagination. His father *was* on the 'Rosy Jones'.

The timbers were wet and slippery as he ran down to the slatted gang-plank, but before he reached it something happened. The deck rails his father had been swinging on didn't seem to be there any longer, and something fell slowly, ever so slowly down the side of the ship, then disappeared with a muffled splash into the blackness. The broken rails, the falling figure and the swirling highlights in the dark water sped across the youth's eyes. Then he was at the edge of the quay and falling head first. His head hit the water and it gurgled in his ears; then he was clear again and swimming. His shoes were much heavier than they had ever been before, and his clothes made the water feel like treacle. Drift-wood and river filth swept into his face till it was difficult to see, then he was near something struggling in the water, and he grabbed out at it. It must be the old man, it had to be. His hands grasped something. It was a beard, and they were struggling together, but he was feeling weak now, and his head kept going under the water. It was difficult to take a breath. The beard came nearer till their faces almost touched, and it was all wet and bedraggled, and the hair hung streaming down the wet face. The man was laughing as he attempted to keep afloat, laughing like he used to when he was mad with liquor.

"Sailors together now, son," he was shouting, then the water would go in his mouth, and his voice would be nothing but a gurgle. He was laughing again now, until the youth's head was swimming and everything seemed to be turning a deep blue. The face grew bigger and bigger until the brown-stained teeth were all he could see.

"Sailors together, son. Sailors together." The voice was shouting, but it was a long way off and getting fainter and fainter until it was very quiet, and he couldn't hear the water in his ears or feel it in his lungs.

He was standing under the lamp outside the warehouse, catching the glittering drops of water in his hand, and they grew and grew until the yellow from the lamp swam about in the centre, just like the gold nuggets he used to imagine. Then it trickled through his fingers and fell splashing to the pavement, and at the same time the lamp dulled and grew dim until it was dark.

"He'll be all right now," someone was saying. They were a long way away in the darkness, but they were coming nearer and light was struggling through the black curtains like dawn. Now it was gathering in one place like the sun. It must be the sun. He opened his eyes, and the light moved. "How do you feel, Stevie?" someone was saying. Whose voice was it? He had heard it before, or had he? Where was he anyhow? His things felt all wet. It suddenly came to him, one scene piling up on to the other. The pub, and the docks. The ship, and and "the old man," he gasped out, struggling to get up.

"Now take it easy, lad," a voice was saying. He felt sick. It must be Flint. Yes. He could see him now. He was holding a torch.

"Well, what about the old man?" he repeated, conscious of saying the same thing over again.

"Come on. Get on your feet, Stevie," Flint was saying, and he felt someone lifting him. "See if you can walk back. Let's get you into somewhere warm, and dry those clothes. Come on, now. Up you come. Steady." The youth swayed unsteadily for a moment or two. He was on the wharf again and across there was the street where he'd met his father. The lamp was still there, and the water running from it. He could see it from here. He turned to Flint. "The old man, Flint? Where is he? What happened to him?" he asked almost urgently, but Flint just stared up the street, and it was minutes before he answered quietly as though he was thinking very deeply. "The old man played his last act to-night Stevie," he said slowly, then breathed deeply as though



to speak was an effort, "and his curtain was up all the time, though he never knew it. Not until it came down. Maybe that's why he laughed. Down there amongst those reflections in the water he might have found something. something he spent his life looking for, now it's too late. Maybe the back of the curtain was silver-lined. We don't know." He looked at the ground, and the youth sighed, striving hard to keep down the lump that was rising in his throat, while across the wharf, and up the street by the warehouse doors, the rain sparkled as it fell from the yellow lamp onto the pavement, sparkling and glittering with life.

*Peter Mayne*

## *EQUESTRIENNE*

AT THE AGE of six months her mother dropped her on her head on the pavement. Her mother's begging-bowl—a toughly resistant half-gourd—partly broke the fall. Nevertheless the results of this accident, which took place at the crowded junction of Park Street and Chowringhee, Calcutta, and caused passers-by to click their tongues irritably at the mother's carelessness, were with her for the best part of thirty years until her death, that is to say, on December 10, 1939.

In a sense it could be argued that being dropped on the head in Chowringhee was an additional handicap for her who had started life in any case at so sad a disadvantage. It certainly had some effect on her brain, such as it was. Yet in another sense it probably tended to simplify life because, although it undoubtedly limited her accomplishments, it gave her an appealingly half-witted air which was professionally useful, and it limited her material needs too. Thus she found, for

example, that she could do perfectly well without any clothes, and to her dying day she wore none. She was not burdened with possessions as most of us are, she had none at all except her mother's begging bowl which she duly inherited along with a number of communicable diseases (the diseases at birth, and the begging bowl at about the age of eight) She had been undernourished from infancy, and was accustomed to it. She and her mother had been used to feeding on the charity of the great Calcutta public eked out by a daily round of the municipal refuse bins. Her mother had done her best by the child according to her lights, but it was a Spartan upbringing and entailed sleeping out on the pavements in all weathers. She certainly must have had a tough constitution, but even the toughest of us yearns for affection, and thus her mother had had no time to bestow on her. She had never known a father's love, nor even his name for the matter of that, her mother being a little uncertain of it herself. He was probably one of several men whose memories her mother would revile whenever she had time to spare from the engrossing and endless search for food.

There is reason to suppose that the child had been deaf from birth, or at least impervious to sound. She had not of course started to speak before she was dropped on the head in Chowringhee and she never spoke thereafter. She neither heard nor replied when anyone addressed her and there was therefore no need for her to have a name.

When her mother died which she did one day without preliminary warning, after a meal of discarded cray fish that she had greedily refused to share with the child she was chased away from the old accustomed place on Chowringhee by a beggar woman larger and more experienced than herself. She betook herself by the accident of following a housewife who carried a large basket of vegetables to one of the respectable residential quarters of the city. Here she found a fine peepul tree mounting guard over a refuse bin on the pavement. She installed herself beside it and for the

next twenty-two years never left the street Her childhood receded, leaving behind it nothing but a dim impression of misery and hunger—which was easy to recall because it was so exactly matched by her present daily experience—and a vivid recurring image conjured up out of some deep recess of her consciousness This image was of a handsome fellow with flowing locks and a mottled, greenish face, riding an enormous horse He was in some way intimately linked with her infant life, though she could not quite determine how he stood in relation to herself. Not her father, probably. He became for her the embodiment of 'man' She liked the idea of 'men' She sat waiting for her horseman but he never came to her street to find her

She became in the course of time a familiar—if unlovely figure in the neighbourhood She grew gross with maturity, and the appealingly half-witted look which had helped her through childhood gave place to one of meanness and cupidity Her hair was matted, though generous in quantity, and her features—always coarse—were now heavy and doomful Lady visitors to the houses in her street would comment over their tea-cups, and with horrified relish, upon the naked Indian woman who had put her tongue out at them as they passed Sometimes hostesses would hand nervous guests a sandwich or a small cream cake with which to placate the creature on their way home She dimly linked cause with effect and put her tongue out as often as she remembered to do so She continued to sit under her peepul tree and after a while no one in the district noticed her any more Occasionally in the hot summer days she would leave her tree and plop herself down in the puddle formed by a leaking fire-hydrant further up the street During the summer of 1936 she was frequently joined there by a pet goose who lived in the garden of a neighbouring boarding-house, but she lost track of the goose when autumn brought with it the cooler weather, and it never reappeared the following hot season, having failed to survive Christmas

She had a repertoire of grimaces and gestures which

as a rule sufficed to secure the simple needs of daily life, a few copper coins, or a handful of rice, or occasionally—as has already been related—a cream cake. Moreover she had discovered that male pedestrians could be galvanized into doing their duty towards her, if encouragement were needed, by a sudden bang with her begging bowl on their behinds as they sought to scuttle by. Sometimes she would accompany her assault with a gesture of such inspired obscenity that her quarry would plunge his hand into his pocket and throw her whatever small change he happened to find in it. It must be said to her credit, and as an instance of her intuitively sound judgment, that she reserved this remarkable display for use *in extremis*, or during the period of the full moon to which she was very responsive.

And yet her life lacked fulness. As the years passed by she became gropingly aware that life should offer more than a peepul tree, a refuse bin and an infrequent cream cake. The need for self-expression and fulfilment is variously satisfied by ladies who lead more conventional lives. They marry and have babies, they sing, they paint the bath room shelves, they re-cover the waste paper basket with the remnants of an old house frock. These emotional outlets were denied to her. Motherhood, that natural function of her sex, was—alas—outside her range, though with gallant pertinacity she never ceased to try as often as an opportunity presented itself. But she immolated herself to no purpose and she became moodier and moodier. Her heart cried out for love or for what she mistook for it, and the need grew within her like a tumultuous bubble, demanding release.

On September 8, 1939, war was declared, but she was by then too busy with her own whirling thoughts to give heed to it. Her personal problems evidently outweighed for her the threat of world destruction. She sat beneath her peepul tree for three months more, drawing into herself the wild winds of the universe, and on the morning of December 10 saturation point was reached. At something after twelve noon a gong

suddenly started to beat inside her head. At last and with overwhelming certainty the call had come. She promptly removed her questing tongue from an old sardine-tin which was part of that morning's salvage (she was very partial to the taste of olive oil), arose, banged a pedestrian over the behind with her begging-bowl and off she went up the street and into the wider world of Park Street, guided by she knew not what. In Park Street, which she had not visited since childhood when her lack of clothing had occasioned no comment at all, she now caused quite a sensation. She paused, peering skywards in search of a sign. She must have received it, for in a few seconds she was off again at increased speed. She opened her mouth and let forth sounds which she could not herself hear, but which greatly startled those who could. Full, rich chords of sound escaped her, in some unknown mode. She left the pavement and, gathering momentum, wove in and out of the bustling traffic, heedless of the meaningless signs of the policemen on point duty. At a reckless pace she continued on her charmed, predestined way. The traffic lights at the junction of Park Street and Chowringhee beckoned green, amber and red. Undeterred by the press of cars and lorries she aimed herself towards the lights, and there there, not more than fifty yards ahead stood a gigantic horseman, reining in his steed on a hillock of rugged bronze, the whole group perched high on a marble plinth. Sword hand on horse's rump, he gazed back over his shoulder as if perhaps she would yet be in time.

'I come, I come' her thoughts sung wordless in her head, though only the wildest hooting issued between her parted lips. 'I come ah, wait'

In a flash she was over the wide street, to the utter confusion of the streaming traffic, and had reached the marble platform. She clambered onto the bronze hillock. The horse stood stock still to enable her to mount its broad back. She sat herself behind the rider and smiled into his sightless eyes. Neither spoke.

And there she remained motionless for upwards of

an hour beneath the noonday sun. A considerable but quite orderly crowd collected and grouped itself about the base of the statue. Sir James Outram—for it was he—continued to stare back over his shoulder at the naked and adoring creature behind him. The expression on his greenish bronze face showed no change.

So long as she sat immobile the crowd waited patiently. A few of them were evidently stirred by some inner emotion. The police arrived with their long staves and asked her to come down. She ignored both their entreaties and their threats. One of them poked at her with his staff and this seemed to break the spell, for she started to edge herself out onto the horse's outstretched tail and contrived to sit astride the tip of it. From this vantage point she made a suggestive sign to the policeman and a ripple of movement passed through the crowd below her. She then slithered back and, climbing over Sir James' shoulders, she reached the horse's head. The crowd watched silent and fascinated, and no doubt in some way communicated to her something of their unexpressed hopes. She responded immediately. With slow deliberation she proceeded to take up a one legged pose between the horse's ears. The crowd muttered expectantly. Spurred on to a yet more reckless exhibition, she dared to essay the gesture which from the safety of her pavement home, had caused such havoc amongst ungenerous pedestrians. Alas the gesture required the employment of both hands and had never before been attempted with one leg in the air. For a few seconds only she held the pose before she lost her precarious balance and fell, cracking open her skull on the bottom step of the marble plinth. She died instantly.

The police, feeling that something was expected of them, covered her body with an old piece of sacking. They also arrested a man in the crowd for immodest behaviour.